

WE NAILED IT! CONFIRMED PLAYSTATION 2 SPECS INSIDE!

Volume 4 • Issue 5 • April 1999

PS *Extreme*

THE PLAYER'S UNOFFICIAL MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE PLAYSTATION

GEX³
DEEP COVER BECKO



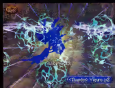
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First pitch, March 31.



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Dear PSExtreme,

Let me just start off by saying: PSExtreme is the all-high magazine. Every month when I receive a new issue, I rejoice with tears and fall to my knees and bow my head to your great magazine.

Now that that's done with, let's get to the question. While "surfing" the net, I decided to ride some electronic waves to the official Konami site. As I looked over some upcoming games like the Resident Evil remake Silent Hill (which, to me, sounds a little freaky with those knife-wielding babies) and the 64 version of Castlevania, I came across a game called "Konami Sacred Fist." The site said it was available now. Here's the question: the almighty mag and the almighty site said nothing about this game to my recollection (I read your mag cover to cover so I know what games appear and what games don't appear). So, what's the deal? I know press for games can get swallowed up by other big titled games (i.e. Silent Hill, Castlevania 64, Syphon Filter...) but that is no excuse for a game to go un-reviewed. I know you guys down there at PSExtreme will take care of this for me.

Thanks,
Tim Sciacia

PS- Guys, I really need a job, can I have one as a writer? I am begging. Someone must have given one of you intelligent minds (like myself) a break.

Ahh, another Stash Launch. Konami never sent Konami Sacred Fist out for review. They just kinda smuck it out to retailers hoping magazines wouldn't get ahold of it and give it the bad review it deserves. We'll give it what for on our web site. (www.psxtreme.com). If you want a job as a writer, you need to write. Send some sample reviews and, if you're the lord of prose we're looking for, we'll send you cash and prizes and maybe a fresh ham or turkey. That goes for all you wannabe reviewers out there, and it works with other magz too! Don't just send them to us, flood the industry, for goodness sake!

Dear PSExtreme,

The name's Dave. Josephen Dave. Er, that's Dave Josephen. So much for being smooth.

I was wondering about the "Contributing Editor" Positions. Specifically, do you pay them, and can I be one? I've been doing a lot of technical writing, recently for Walt Disney Television Animation and, before that, IBM Global Services. I have never written anything that has been published anywhere, except for all the stuff that jerk Segun stole from me, but that's all hydrogen under the bridge now. Some say that there

is nothing redneckier about writing lengthy, boring, toots in which only the most anal-retentive engineers have a passing interest (even the anal ones usually only look at the pictures), and I wholeheartedly agree with them. That is why I want to break free the bonds of monstrosity binding me to my cubicle, and use my processing prowess for the good of man, the powers of right, the light side of the force. I believe my generation is sending a very strong, very clear message to the evil boss-skurdge inhabiting the universe, WE WANNA PLAY VIDEOGAMES ALL DAY, AND WE WANT TO GET PAID FOR IT. Is that really too much to ask? My wife thinks so. Prove her wrong.

Thank you.

The same thing applies to you, huh. Send a sample review and a big mushy butt-kissing letter and, if we take a liking to you, maybe we'll send fresh cold cuts or a contract.

Hello to all at PS Extreme.

First off, you guys are doing a great job with your magazine and I commend you for it. Next, can I get you to spare a few moments and read my little thingy here for me please? Thank you.

Beyond the Beyond.

Well, my favorite games are RPG's but, really, what can I say about this one? I suppose the storyline is O.K., although it is a bit, how do I say, boring. What really gets me though, is the gameplay.

When you start out in the game, your character (whatever you have chosen to name him) is about equal in strength to the enemies you encounter. It stays this way too, until you get about 8 to 10 hours into it. Upon reaching this "lovely" point, the enemies become very strong and are always one step ahead of you. They are stronger, many whacking your party members for half of their hit points, and some cast spells such as fire 2 or wind 2 that drain every person in your party's hit points in half. This began to get extremely annoying and I found myself running more often than fighting in the deep, dark dungeons. This also leads me to my next point.

The dungeons in the game are more annoying than in any other role playing game I have ever played. All of the puzzles in the dungeons were the same. It was always move this, put that, step around this, and then go up the stairs. These dungeons were more of a pain than a pleasure to do, and I just wanted to get the thing over with instead of taking the time to explore thoroughly. The main character in the game is also a point to be picked on. Through the game, he really never develops. It's like he's a tag along, the other characters are always controlling the way to go and what to do as he stands there like a blob. To me, the main character isn't even

a main character.

Well anyway, even though there's more bad to be bashed at about this game, I'll get on to one of the precious good points.

The battle system is a nice quality. Each character (you can have 5 on the battle field at once) has a set number of these points called LP that go up at level ups like hit points and magic points do. Once you run out of hit points, called VP, the character turns "groggy." This character is then "groggy" for a round or so and then the LP kick in. They revive your character and give him/her some VP back. Once the LP runs out, though, the character perishes and is no longer playable until you get him/her resurrected by a Thurple of Aeon (like a healer) in any town. This costs a whole lotta money, so ya don't want to be floundering those LP around too often.

Also, in a battle, you can rapidly press the X button while attacking to create a super attack of some sort or while being attacked to guard the blow. This is extremely helpful in those LONG boss fights and crummy enemy encounters that occur every 3 steps.

In short, Beyond the Beyond is just plain blah. Why buy something like this when there are other excellent RPG's like Final Fantasy 7 or Breath of Fire 3 or Xenogears that say, "Hey, I'm good, pick me!" Unless you are a die hard gamer and think you might want this one, stay away. I'd rather watch L.A., and that's just not right.

Bottom line: 74 %

Thank you for reading my review for Beyond the Beyond. If this letter is printed, could you please tell me if I did a good job, or if not? It would be nice to know because I would maybe like to become a game reviewer later in life and I need to know if I need to work on my skills. Again, thanks for reading this.

den-636

See, now den-o has the idea. He sent a review to see if we'd like it. Mr. den-o, your review wasn't too bad. There were a few grammar and punctuation issues we had to take care of and there wasn't much humor or wit. A good effort, but not worthy of him or prizes. We recommend you practice awhile. Perhaps start your own game reviewing web site to get some good experience.

Dear PSExtreme,

After receiving my March issue of PS Extreme and reading your response to Ed Reynolds' letter, I began to feel a little pissed at you so called response.

Being a member of the industry for over 10 years, and a gamer for twice as long, I have watched systems come and go, and with change there is always the fear of something new.

As with the systems before it, Sony has a uphill battle to fight when the Dreamcast comes state side. Most likely when the two machines are compared side by side, graphics will decide the victor. I know that this

EX/AL

is a bad thing because graphics do not a good game make, but it seems in this case, it does, and seeing that Sony has not released any info on its new system, things are going to be even harder.

Being a Dreamcast owner myself I can honestly say the era of 32 bit gaming is coming to a close. As for Sonic being "lethal" (whatever that means), and having horrible control, I would have to say that I have not experienced any problems with the game (minus some camera work that will be fixed for a US release).

Having all the systems that have ever released state side, and most of the really great games that have released with them, Sonic is in the upper tier, if not one of the best. The music, graphics and gameplay are incredible and, after showing it to three friends of mine, they have all opted to sell their Sonys to get one, keeping in mind that they were once all hard-core Sony fans as you are. Not bad for a game "with no sense of adventure".

Obviously, you did not play the game to the end where Sonic saves the city in real time. How much more adventure do you need? I mean come on guys, nothing before this game minus Zelda has ever stirred such emotion and respect. Sure it's a little glitchy, but it was rushed to market, in record time.

As for the rest of the software, Ed was right again, VF30b is astounding, and the best fighters on Sony's machine don't even come close, it is a remarkable conversion considering its development time (6 months), and it was not made by Am2. And, yes, I have played just about every fighter out there, nothing commands respect like this game does.

Lastly we come to Sega Rally 2, by far the most beautiful racer on any machine, I have showed the game to several people, mostly to Giant Turbine nuts to get a response, and almost all of them were in racing heaven. Not bad for a machine that "Sony and Nintendo have nothing to worry about", right.

I won't even mention Powerstone, Get Bass, House of the Dead 2, or tons of other arcade perfect software that is soon to be released. Better than Model3, you bet!

In closing, I would appreciate if you cancel my subscription to your magazine, after reading several other mags it is obvious that you are biased towards Sega. (sic) (Uh, I think you misunderstand the concept. Ed.) Where they have praised the machine (Next-Generation, Games Republic, Gamefan, etc.), you seem to be the only publication that has had an ill response, to the point of insult.

Oh yeah, by the way, my PlayStation and my Dreamcast share equal space in my entertainment center, they seem to get along just fine.

Windy Duvon

While just about everyone in the Dimension Publishing offices coughed up the hefty amount of cash to buy the system and the four games when it was released, nobody was overwhelmed by the machine. Sure, graphics are a very important aspect, and the Dreamcast delivers superb, but there has to be something behind the pretty pictures to make that good-looking game a great playing one. We really do have nothing against the Dreamcast

(or Sega) in all honesty, but we are a PlayStation-specific magazine, so you're going to be hard-pressed to find us singing the praises of Sega's system in these pages. As far as accurate reporting goes, the Dreamcast launch in Japan was not a success historically speaking. Half of the promised games were delayed by months and the ones that did make it to launch were rushed and incomplete at best. We personally feel Sonic and Rally are the best so far, but two-to-three great games out of nine isn't the best record. Only time will tell whether or not the Dreamcast will be a success, but you can rest assured, Sony isn't just sitting back and not planning for the future. Maybe you should hold onto your subscription for a few more issues, you might miss some big announcements...

Dear PSExtreme,

When I opened up my friends PSExtreme issue today, I received a little paper that said "GET 6 FREE MONTHS OF PSEXTREME." Now, does this mean that I get 6 issues, then I HAVE to subscribe, or can I have the option of subscribing or not after my 6th issue? (I still will probably subscribe anyway, but I need to know.)

With most mags, after the trial issue, you have the choice to cancel or subscribe... I just wanted to know how your mag was run.

Tharal

Josh Springer

Near the end of your six month sub, we'll send you a letter asking if you would like to subscribe for a full year for \$21.95. If you don't respond, you'll never hear from us again and you definitely won't ever receive fresh ham.

Dear PSExtreme,

In last month's issue you had rated the Game Ice accessory. At the end of the review you were going to reveal the web site to order it on and the message was cut off. I would like to order one and I would like to know the web site to go to. So, would you please supply me with that information.

Thank you

James

Oops! We'd like to apologize to both our readers and Consumer Benefits MSP. The web site is www.computersplumc.com/gameice.

Dear PSExtreme,

Hey guys, I'm back! It's me, JetMoto Junkie! What's up? I wrote in a couple months ago to ask where Jet Moto 3 was, and you told me it was being made by a new company. I ended up receiving A LOT of email about it, and eventually found out that it was going to be made by, dare I say it, 987 STUDIOS!!!!!! Now, I've always preferred EA and Singstar over 987 any day, but when I found out that my beloved Jet Moto

franchise was going into the hands of 987, I nearly cried. I've seen what 987 has done to my best friend's dearly loved Twisted Metal series, and I just hope that 987 doesn't screw this one up. I know this probably went get printed since I'm putting down the 987 franchise, but I just thought I'd inform you anyway. Thanks, and keep up the EXCELLENT work. Peace.

JetMoto Junkie

Now, now. Don't give up on 987 so quickly! After all, they did bring us Syphon Filter. Our inside sources tell us JetMoto 3 is going to be amazing. We'll let everyone know as soon as we get something playable.

Dear PSExtreme,

Hello! I want to know when Super Mario All-Stars is coming to PS? How do I order it? When will it come to Sweden?

Helena Lilström

Super Mario All-Stars is due for release on April 1st.

Dear PSExtreme,

I have nothing to do but read old PSEX's and play PlayStation. So I decided to write. I have some questions for the mag guys.

1. Why was this not published?
2. Are you sure Twisted Metal III isn't compatible with multi tap? My multi tap works fine with TMS.
3. Do you know what the advanced attack code for invisibility in Twisted Metal III is? If so, what is it?
4. Do you like ketchup, I like ketchup. Pikachu (poke mon) also likes ketchup.
5. TMS rocks. I don't care what you think.
6. How did you rate South Park?
7. One more thing I have to say: PSExtreme rocks!

E. Sells,

New Hartford, NY

PS: Say "Hi" to lenely old Greg

1. There wasn't enough cash included with the letter.
2. We can neither confirm nor deny.
3. Domo.
4. We like catsup.
5. Okay.
6. "R" or "Mature."
7. Thanks.

Address all mail to:

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PlayStation Gaming News

WE JUST LOVE IT WHEN WE'RE RIGHT

In our February issue, we were the first to report the details of PlayStation 2's technical specifications. In essence, we stated that the PS2 would present 60 million polygons per second at a constant frame rate of 60 FPS, and that the storage medium would be DVD. How right were we? Check this out...

Masakazu Suzuki, a Director at Sony Computer Entertainment Inc., recently made a presentation to engineers and other interested parties, gathered for a technical presentation at an ISBCC conference (kind of a computer geek pilgrimage to Mecca).

According to Mr. Suzuki, Sony had been working on a new level gaming technology (the Sony representatives gathered for the event stopped short of labeling the hardware as the next PlayStation), for the past couple of years. The details are as follows:

The new system will be built around 128-bit architecture. It will rely on three parallel processors: a CPU, which runs at 250MHz with a floating-point coprocessor, and two floating-point vector units. The idea is that this future game machine will provide "behavior synthesis", allowing for the autonomous behavior of objects, physical simulation, and environment synthesis. In addition, the system design will provide realistic geometry with complex geometry translation and complex surface models, at high resolution displays. In conjunction with Toshiba, Sony design engineers have spent the past 2+ years working on realizing these goals.

According to Sony, the new architecture, when using all three processors in parallel, can calculate 86 million polygons per second. As a point of comparison, Voodoo3 (which recently began shipping to retail) displays approximately 8 million FPS. While no details of the media storage device, sound, etc. were mentioned, the fact that the architecture is designed to deal with MPEG3 standards suggests that DVD is a given.

What does this mean for all of us? At roughly seven times the power of the current state of the art graphics

presentation technology, it means NOTHING is going to come close to PS2. More detail, better clarity, faster games and more believable environments than ever before imagined will be the new standard. For our next issue, Greg will be making a trek with Sony to Japan and we expect to have more information for you on these exciting developments. While there is no possibility of PS2 making it to the states in 1999, the new millennium beckons...

MORE RUGRATS

THQ recently announced that they have signed a deal with Nickelodeon that gives them exclusive gaming rights to the likenesses of the Rugrats characters through the year 2001. With the recent success of the PlayStation version of "Search for Reptar", both parties are obviously happy to further solidify the relationship.

"We are thrilled to continue this winning relationship with Nickelodeon in bringing kids of all ages this enormously successful line of Rugrats games," stated Germaine Gioia, Vice President of Marketing at THQ. "THQ has been a fantastic partner for our Rugrats games," Nickelodeon's Steve Youngwood added: "Having mastered the learning curve on this phenomenal property, we look forward to partnering to make new and innovative games kids love."

The bad news: How do you keep your five year old from gumming up the PlayStation? Oh, well... Sony wouldn't argue with you if you wanted to buy another!

R4 ON AGAIN

In a recent issue, we reported that Namco had delayed Ridge Racer 4 until late Summer and that the Jagoon would not ship in the US. Apparently, there has been a change of heart at Namco and the

schedule has been revised again. Namco has now declared that R4 will hit retail shelves on May 4. The best part is, however, that, if you pre-order the game, you will receive the Jagoon controller as well (the Jagoon works ONLY with R4... no other racing games are compatible). The retail price for this package is \$59.96 and it will only be available at a few, exclusive retail chains. While there is no word from Namco on which retailers will be offering the bundle, we should have the info. in time for the next issue. Oh, yeah... did we mention that R4 will also include a 60 frames per second version of the original Ridge Racer? Just thought you might like to know! See the review this issue.

WE JUST KEEP BUYING GAMES

According to the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), 1998 video game sales bettered 1997 sales performance by a figure of 37 percent. Interactive entertainment software sales for 1998 reached a record-breaking \$5.5 billion, with video game sales accounting for \$3.7 billion of the total. Doug Lowenstein, the President of IDSA, expects the bull market for games to continue: "We expect the industry to continue to grow at double-digit rates in 1999. With more technological advances each year, the introduction of new titles and platforms, and mass-market acceptance of video and PC games, it is clear that the industry is still scoring big."

Heh, heh... he said "scored"!



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PlayStation Gaming News

BEST SELLING PLAYSTATION TITLES RANKED ON UNIT SALES JANUARY 1999

THQ's
WCW/NWO Thunder



1

last month

average retail price
\$41



Konami's
Metal Gear Solid



2

last month 3

average retail price
\$47



Hudson's
Frogger



3

last month

average retail price
\$23



Sony's
Crash Bandicoot 3 Warped



4

last month 1

average retail price
\$40



Sony's
Crash Bandicoot 2



5

last month 6

average retail price
\$21



Sony's
Gran Turismo



6

last month

average retail price
\$41



EA's
Knockout Kings



7

last month 10

average retail price
\$42



Sony's
Spyro the Dragon



8

last month

average retail price
\$40



THQ's
Rug Rats



9

last month 9

average retail price
\$42



Sony's
A Bug's Life



10

last month 8

average retail price
\$40



Source: NPD TRS's Video Games Tracking Service
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** Not in Top 10 Last Month

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JEFF GORDON



For this two-part interview (GJ will run the second half in next month's issue), we sat down with a few of the developers over at Real Sports, the company responsible for developing ASC Games' Jeff Gordon XS Racing. As it turns out, XS Racing is more than just a generic racing game with a celebrity endorsement tacked on. It

means that Gordon has been a video game fan since the days when Aart was king. Instead of simply letting ASC use his image, Gordon demanded a hand in the development process to ensure he approved. XS Racing is tentatively scheduled for PlayStation release in March.

PSE: Why the futuristic setting for a racer? Don't you think the "techno-racer" is getting overdone a bit?

Real Sports: Well, Jeff made it clear he didn't want to create a racing simulation. Although he felt the simulations were cool, he wanted his game to be different. He wanted to give players a totally action-packed, arcade racing experience and, in order to achieve that, he felt we had to take the whole racing experience to the next level. We decided a futuristic setting and look would be the way to go in order to heighten the experience, since we couldn't possibly capture what Jeff experiences from week to week on the racetrack. So, instead of regular oval tracks, straight-aways, fuel management, pressure gauges or tweaking a car's specifications to shave seconds off of lap times, we built a competitive stock car racing game in a world where boundaries don't exist. Imagine a world where cars that handle and look like Ferraris are reaching speeds in XS of 300mph! From the moment the green flag drops, you enter into a battle of speed and excitement where your competition is constantly riding your tail and rubbing fenders on 45 degree banks, corkscrew loops, and jumps!

PSE: What does XS Racing bring to the table that we haven't seen before?

RS: One thing that's different is our approach to track design. We've got creative and original "fantasy" track designs that somewhat stay true to the laws of physics. For instance, the banking and cornering in the game can get really extreme where players can actually run low, middle, or high and the higher you get up on the banking, the more speed you'll attain carrying you through the corners. Also, the level of competition and challenging AI experienced will be like no other seen in a racing game. Players will always feel like they're "in a race". In many other racing games, it always seems like you're driving alone with your competition nowhere

to be found.

PSE: How does damage affect your car? Is it possible to repair the vehicle?

RS: First of all — pit stops are a thing of the past in Jeff Gordon XS Racing. Instead, as you incur damage in the game due to constant bumping and grinding from your competition and bouncing off the racetrack walls, on-the-fly morphing fixes your car like new — so there's always non-stop, hardcore racing action going on. However, while the car is repairing itself, your speed will decrease.

PSE: Are the cars modeled after any real vehicles, or are they all fantasy? How different are the cars in terms of attributes?

RS: There are 4 unique car model body types featured in Jeff Gordon XS Racing and are based on original designs. The performance of each car is modified and tuned specifically for each of the 4 unique body types according to the following specifications: top speed, acceleration, handling, and flight control. However, we may throw in a couple of secrets.

PSE: What kind of involvement did Jeff Gordon have with the title?

RS: Since day one, Jeff has been involved as a co-producer and co-designer, sharing his thoughts on various components — from track design to vehicle physics. Unknown to most, Jeff Gordon has been playing video games since he was five years old, which was right about the same time that he started racing. When ASC Games approached Jeff about doing Jeff Gordon XS Racing, he made it perfectly clear that he wasn't just going to sign his name to the title but actually wanted to be a completely hands-on participant in the development process. Jeff's input as an avid gamer and world class champion race car driver has been invaluable in allowing us to take his racing expertise and knowledge and combine it with the best technology and features that a video game has to offer — graphics, sound, and gameplay.

(continues next issue)

EXPERIT

LONG AGO, A SMALL COUNTRY WAS RESTORED MYSTICAL OBJECTS POSSESSING MYSTICAL POWERS. BUT THESE OBJECTS, RELICS, WERE MUCH TOO POWERFUL. EVENTUALLY, THE EMPIRE DESTROYED ITSELF, SEALING ITS SECRET FOR ETERNITY. 1000 YEARS LATER, ONE MAN HAS UNLEASHED THE POWER AND ONCE AGAIN, THE CONTINENT FACES TOTAL DESTRUCTION. PIT RELIC AGAINST RELIC AS 12 INDIVIDUALS FIGHT FOR PEACE, POWER, GREED AND PROSPERITY. OBJECTS OF POWER FAIL, BUT THE SCARS REMAIN...



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rollcage

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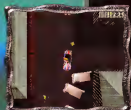
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GRAND THEFT AUTO

Mission Pack #1: London 1969



The focus of this interview is ROCKSTAR Games' first fully home-developed title, Grand Theft Auto: London 1969. We sat down with Dan Houser, producer and screenplay writer on the game and got a taste background information on the title and their plans for this first-ever PlayStation expansion pack.

PSXExtreme: Could you give our readers a brief description and background on yourself and GTA: London 1969?

DAN ROUSER: The Game: It's a mission pack to accompany Grand Theft Auto, the first ever to appear on PlayStation, set in London, in 1969 — it's essentially a tongue in cheek look at the life of a British gangster as depicted in film and on TV, in much the same way as GTA was a look at the American gangster. As with GTA, the player can either fulfill the missions he's set by a series of unpleasant associates, or do what the hell he wants hanging around in a heaving, and very much living city wherein there's cars to steal and trouble to cause. The game has an incredible period feel to it, due to the nature of the missions, the soundtrack, and the cars, while the city really looks like London.

Me: Before moving to New York, I was living in Colombia for a few months, to experience a little bit of the GTA vibe in the flesh, so to speak. Before that, I worked as a producer at BMG Interactive, working predominantly on Three Lions, The Official England Football Team Game and the releases of You Don't Know Jack for Germany and France. I began as lead writer on the Bafta nominated You Don't Know Jack UK. As you can probably tell, my interests are literally trivial. I also like films, philosophy and the history of civil disorder.

PSX: Is the game a straightforward sequel with just a new location or have there been gameplay changes/improvements?

DH: The gameplay is similar to GTA — you fulfill missions, each one consisting of any number of illegal and immoral activities. However, the missions themselves are a lot more complicated than in GTA — after a very short introductory mission, each mission consists of several stages, with lots of tasks to perform. At the same time, because the game is set in only one city, we've added a new dimension to the gameplay. The player experiences this through the three main chapters of the game a progressive rising through the ranks of the criminal underworld, and the fact that characters that you meet early in the game

re-appear later on. The player feels much more involved with what he is doing, and is always desperate to keep his bosses as happy as possible, predominantly because one of them is clearly beginning to lose his sanity.

PSX: We were told this game is an expansion pack, rather than a stand-alone title. Will you need the original GTA to play the game and will the MSRP be lower than standard PlayStation titles?

DH: Yes — It is an add-on pack — the first ever on PSX and, yes, you will require the original game to play it. And, yes! It will be significantly cheaper than a standard PSX release. Unfortunately, I don't work in sales, so can't give you a price, but I think it will be about half the price of a normal title. Our reasons for making it as an add-on pack are simple — the game is not a sequel to GTA. The full sequel, GTA 2 is due this Autumn.

Grand Theft Auto: London 1969 is a game we made for the fans of GTA — to keep them satisfied until GTA 2 appears, and to do a version of the game set in our home town. This is the first time that anyone has done a mission pack / expansion pack on PlayStation.

PSX: What is the reasoning for staying with the top-down perspective vs. a first/third person 3D perspective?

DH: Their are two very simple reasons for keeping the perspective. Firstly, technical — there is no way that on existing hardware you could get as many moving objects, each with it's own behavior, as you do on GTA, in a polygon-based engine. GTA has to be set in a heaving metropolis, otherwise it would be very unrealistic. You cannot make 3D heaving metropolises yet. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, you need to understand what GTA is. It's a chase game. You get chased by the police, you chase people, you race around the city doing wrong. How could you give the impression of being chased without using a top down perspective? It wouldn't be terribly thrilling to have to check a tiny digital rearview mirror, would it? The best footage of police chases always comes from those POLICE CAMERA shows, and are filmed from helicopters. This is exactly the camera perspective we try to emulate in GTA.

PSX: The original GTA was a bit racy, adult-themed and definitely controversial in nature. Will the sequel retain the hard edge of the original or will it be toned down to be more accessible to all ages?



DH: GTA depends on a certain amount of illicit behavior. If we were to tone it down, then we would be selling out in a most pathetic way. You can't make a game about stealing cars that is suitable for kids. Young kids shouldn't play GTA. Anyone else will hopefully realize that our portrayal of the underworld is very irreverent, and we don't glamorize these people in anyway. So, this and any future GTA games will definitely not tone down their content.

PSEX: Why London?

DH: Having done 3 US cities, there really wasn't anywhere else with a suitable history of organized crime for us to gorge on. And, besides, a large number of the Rockstar team are from London, and we all grew up watching the same TV and films and wanted to make a game about it. It might just change the commonly held American view of England as a kind of Dickensian backwater, where crime extends about as far as stealing apples from the local greengrocers.

PSEX: One of the coolest things about the original GTA was the themed music from the various car radios that would play when you hopped in. Will GTA London continue this trend? If so, will the music be from the appropriate time period?

DH: Oh yes. We've got probably the coolest soundtrack to ever grace a game. There are three specially recorded tracks by up and coming London bands, which will be used in specific parts of the game to give added atmosphere. The majority of the soundtrack, though, functions identically to that of GTA — a series of radio stations that the player can listen to. Here, our focus was on creating a cool soundtrack, specific to both the period and the underground, chase based style of the game. We licensed a lot of very cool film score music from cult Italian pictures from the '60s to give the game that swinging London feel, while licensing a lot of original era-reggae from the legendary UK reggae label, Trojan. As a complete package, the game soundtrack is incredible, and I think people will be surprised at how much it gives the game the period feel we have been aiming for.

PSEX: Judging from the hype and success of the first, a sequel/expansion pack was probably a no-brainer. Is this the second of a planned series?

DH: No — this is a just little taster for fans of

the original, and our homage to our home town. GTA 2 will arrive before the end of the year, and this will make such enormous technical advances compared to GTA or GTA: London 1969, and is the full sequel. However, the game benefits because it isn't part of a series — it is a one-off, which has been very carefully created with obsessive attention to detail — it's very much a labor of love, rather than an insidious piece of corporate cashing in. We will only continue to make new GTA games while we can think of something original and fun to do with the concept.

PSEX: When will the game be available?

DH: In April of this year.

PSEX: The original GTA was developed by DMA Designs, have they had their hands in the sequel or is this wholly a Rockstar development?

DH: GTA London has been a wholly Rockstar development, as we wanted complete creative control over the game design. That said, what our team of programmers and artists have achieved using DMA's code is quite incredible. Besides, those sick people at DMA Design are very busy finishing off GTA 2, which is looking incredible.

PSEX: We appreciate your time, is there anything else you would like to impart to our readers before you go?

DH: Don't believe the hype. Grand Theft Auto was not a success because of it's edgy and controversial content. It was a success because it is original, immensely fun to play and incredibly immersive.



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CROC

Since the birth of Mario, every home console has been graced with a few memorable action platform characters. The PlayStation is obviously included in this list, with such favorites like Crash, Spyro, Sir Dan Fortesque (my personal favorite), GEX, Jersey Devil and, of course, Croc. This sweet-natured Crocodile appeared in his own 3D adventure back in '97 and has been scheduled to make a return in May of this year.

The original Croc: Legend of the Gobboos was one of the first action/platform games on the PlayStation to offer free-roaming 3D environments. While Argonaut, the team responsible for the design and coding of the game, proved it's possible to do a Mario 64-style game on the PlayStation, the game was not without fault. Croc's environments were broken down into tiny areas or rooms which had to be loaded from one to the next, diminishing the impact of go-anywhere 3D. With the knowledge that comes from one project to the next, the developers went back to the drawing board to create a bigger, badder and even better sequel.

Croc 2 takes place after the end of the first. Not soon after defeating Baron Dante, Croc finds a message in a bottle and discovers that his long lost parents have been searching for him. It's a tough decision, but he decides to leave the island inhabited by the playful and friendly Gobboos and search out to find his family. Arriving on the mainland, Croc encounters a whole new host of Gobbo friends... and plenty of new enemies as well. It seems that Dante has been resurrected by his disciples, the Dantinis, who were lost without him. Could the message from his parents be a plot to trap Croc, or are they really out there? Now, once again, Croc must fight for more than just his family, as he must once again put a stop to the Baron and his evil schemes.

One of the first things you'll notice about Croc 2, is that the world and environments have "opened up" quite a bit. You will no longer feel



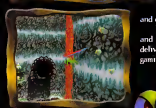
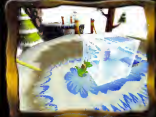
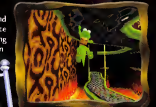
EXCLUSIVE

like you're navigating through a series of small rooms. Instead Argonaut has created large, open-ended environments for Croc to explore. Croc can also converse with the local Gobbos he encounters on his adventures. Some will give him important items while others will send him out on necessary missions and sub-quests which he must accomplish in order to advance to the next area. In addition to the overhauled graphic engine, Croc has been re-worked as well. The new Croc boasts a higher polygon count, improved animation and has learned a few new moves. Besides his original repertoire, Croc can now execute a high tail attack, a power flip, a hanging kick and a boost super jump. He can now also paddle along the surface of water, in addition to diving into the depths.

Some of the other features Croc 2 will offer include the introduction of dozens of new characters — including themed Gobbos, Dantins and much more ominous and clever bosses; a variety of vehicles to ride — from a race down a river on wooden rafts and high-flying with a hang glider, to navigating a network of underground tracks on a mine car and staying atop a rolling boulder as it heads down a curvy mountainside and he has the ability to collect and use crystals to buy useful items — such as jelly jumps, extra lives and clockwork Gobbos.

With all of the extra features, additions and improvements, Croc 2 promises to deliver a solid sequel and a memorable gaming experience. As it stands, expect to see the game hit store shelves between May and June.

GREG



Fighter Maker

Forget what you know about fighting games because AGETEC (formerly known as ASCII) is about to break all the rules with their upcoming design-your-own moves title, *Fighter Maker*.

Have you ever wanted to incorporate that one move you always use to beat down your brother into a video game? How about the Vulcan death grip? Or, what about those moves you've seen late night on TV with that freakin' Tae-bo infomercial? Well, now you can! Having been announced prior to last year's E3 show, then seemingly canceled, *Fighter Maker* is

now confirmed and set for release sometime around June. We got a chance to check it out first hand in AGETEC's office earlier this month and, let me tell you, this final version was worth the wait.

The thing that's special about *Fighter Maker* is the fact that it gives you the ability to create and edit any move. It really seems to be quite amazing. Basically, the game features a regular Tekken-style Fighting Mode and then an additional Edit Mode. The Edit Mode is what sets this one apart because it will allow players to design their own moves, throws, walks, runs, and win/lose animations in a simple, yet all-encompassing interface.

There will be a total of 20 characters to choose from (including Skullo Mania from *Street Fighter Alpha*) and each of them have their own fighting style and unique character moves. After choosing your character, you can go into the Edit Mode and take any of their moves, look at them frame by frame, and adjust any part of their body (with no regard at all for the actual physical limitations of the human skeletal system). Anything you can dream up, can be done — ANYTHING! And the best part is, the editing interface seems to be extremely straight forward. You just go into the frame you'd like to edit, and pick a point on the part of the body you want to move, and then move it where you want. The game does the rest — by filling in the



EXCLUSIVE

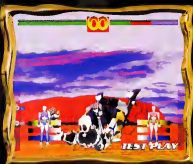
frames in between to make the animation look totally pro.

The editing isn't limited to the character's physical moves either. You can also add in sound effects, change the damage incurred and program your character's AI. What's more, there is a test mode where you can view the AI, altitude (for air juggle combos), collision boxes, and control inputs.

Once you have your own set of moves, you just save them to a memory card. That means you can beat down your friends using your own style that you created in your sick little head. Not only that, but you can adapt your moves to any of the characters in the game. In all, there is a library of over 600 pre-programmed moves that can be changed around and edited.

For all of you wishing you could make your own game, *Fighter Maker* is a dream come true. AGETEC has promised to include a huge comprehensive manual to make things easy, so, if you have ever had a hankering for some game design, this may be just the fix. Cap that off with the ability to design your own fighting moves, and soon you will be able create the fighting game you've always wanted. So far, it looks like we have a winner on our hands, so stay tuned because you know we will have more on this one.

Dillion



GOD BLESS THE RING



When Square Soft originally announced they would be developing PlayStation titles, a loud, resounding cheer came from the role playing community (as everyone knows, Square has been creating outstanding, high-quality RPGs since even before the NES glory days). But, little did anyone realize, they would also set out to conquer just about every popular game genre around, creating some of their own in the process. In addition to RPGs, shooters and cinematic adventures, Square has even dabbled in the competitive and tough-to-beat 3D fighting realm. Their first effort, *Tobal No. 1* (published and distributed by Sony), was surprisingly good, showcasing high-resolution graphics and 60 fps action. As a bonus, *Tobal* came with a dungeon-exploring sub-game thrown in for good measure. Unfortunately, the title didn't sell in the numbers it was expected to do and, most likely because of this, the much-improved sequel never made it to our shores (although the "official" reason for not releasing *Tobal 2* was due to the fact that it would have taken too much time to translate and localize for the American market).

Fortunately for us, Square and Dream Factory (the developers of the *Tobal* fighters) took the knowledge they gained from developing these games and put it into an all-new coin-op fighting game, *Ehrgeiz*. While not as popular as the *Mortal Kombat*s, *Tekken*s and *Virtua Fighters*, *Ehrgeiz* held its own at the arcades



and featured a unique roster of contenders, including Cloud and Tifa from Final Fantasy VII. After its run in the arcades, it was pretty much a no-brainer that it would show up on the PlayStation. The only question was, would



just a straight arcade port.

For starters, Square and Dream Factory have attempted to present a fighting game in a unique and different fashion. While most fighters restrict its characters to a defined 3D space, only allowing them to sidestep an attack as a defensive tactic, Ehrgeiz features an "anything goes" method of play where each character has the flexibility to move in a full 360-degree range of motion (much like Bushido Blade). Not only can you run in any direction, but most arenas are multi-leveled, allowing your character to jump up and

it be released in the States, or suffer the same fate as Total 2! The answer, quite obviously, is that Square is releasing the US PlayStation version of Ehrgeiz this May and, as usual, have gone way over and above delivering

down to different heights. In addition to the refreshing game play, Ehrgeiz promises to offer a huge laundry list of features and modes that has become much more commonplace with each new wave of fighters released.

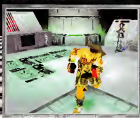
This includes a high-resolution graphic engine running at 60 frames per second, both an original and arranged music soundtrack, a total of sixteen playable characters including favorites from Final Fantasy VII, both hand-to-hand and weapons-based fighting, and a remarkable CG-rendered intro and endings for each character.



In addition to an outstanding fighting game, Ehrgeiz also offers up a variety of mini-games, as well as the return of the full-featured, 3D adventure RPG. The mini games range from racing an opponent around a track, using force if necessary to win, to a capture the flag affair where the first person to grab the flag remains victorious. The RPG quest is the best and most comprehensive yet, showcasing randomly created dungeons and an amazing 3rd-person, 3D perspective.

The release of Ehrgeiz is just around the corner and carries with it Square's magic touch. Since this is just a preview, we'll leave it at that. Check back next issue to find out just how good their next 3D fighting game really is.

GREG



BLOODY ROAR II

If you are a regular reader, you might recall that I gave Sony/Hudson's original *Bloody Roar* a Gold rating of 93% back in our March '98 issue. The game had plenty going for it: the ability to transform your human fighter into a raging beast (or a cute bunny rabbit, for that matter), a fighting style that mixed the best elements of *Tekken* and *Street Fighter*, amazing graphics and special effects, and tons of extra secrets and modes. Granted, there was room for improvement — there were only eight characters from which to choose and the fighting was a bit on the sloppy side — but, that's what sequels are for. After all, the only reason games like *Tekken* and *Street Fighter* rank so high is because they have been tweaked, tuned and refined year after year.

As it turns out, SCEA has teamed up with Hudson once more and is currently putting the final localization touches to this year's sequel, *Bloody Roar II*. First things first; for all you import gamers out there who



LIVE

purchased the Japanese version, Sony is making some significant changes to the US version of the game. These include a new opening and intro music (the import version features a rock video of a popular Japanese metal band mixed with game footage), the addition of Analog control, a Practice Mode, implementation of a One-Button Sidestep feature (only in the Custom and Two-Player Modes) and new congratulation screens.

As far as the rest of us, who typically abstain from paying the big bucks just to get the game a few months early, here's a list of features and options that will be in the final US version: There will be seven new playable characters, as well as four returning favorites, with all new moves and looks [this brings the total collection to 11, which includes two hidden characters]. The game will also feature the ability to create your own combo moves in the new Custom Mode — we'll go more in-depth on this feature with the review in next month's issue. There's more — BRII has raised the graphic bar with a higher-resolution display [512 x 480 versus the original's 320 x 240], clean, crisp and extremely detailed graphics, 60 screaming frames of animation per second [again, Bloody Roar ran at a slower 30] and tons of out-of-control special effects. Lastly, Bloody Roar II includes a new Story Mode — each character's story unfolds with each victory, told through 100 graphically stunning scenes — and the addition of the ever-popular Dual Shock vibration feature.

As it stands, Bloody Roar II should be available sometime this May. The preview version we received looks downright amazing and plays remarkably well. Fighting fans will definitely have plenty to shout about soon enough, with Square's Ehrgeiz, ASCII's Fighter Maker and, now, Sony's Bloody Roar II. We should be back next month with a comprehensive review.

Greg



FINAL FANTASY VII



With the Japanese release of the eagerly awaited sequel to the most successful and longest-running console RPG in gaming history, import gamers are finally getting a taste of what the talented Final Fantasy team have pulled off with Final Fantasy VIII. While an English, localized version won't be available in the States until sometime this July, we felt that it's a good time to start talking about the specifics of this incredible RPG and prepare you for what surely will be one of '99's most memorable titles.

The purpose of this article is to outline the story and introduce the main players in the game. As a note: some of the details could possibly change between now and the North American release of the game.

THE STORY:

At a glance, the world seemed to be a peaceful place. But...

At the private soldier training academy "Garden", Squall Leonhart, a young man and soldier who recently signed up to become a member of SeeD, encounters a free spirited young woman by the name of Rinoa Heartilly. Squall is typically a loner and doesn't involve himself with other people but, within time, he becomes affected by Rinoa's way of life and upbeat attitude. As time passes at the academy, Squall



EXCLUSIVE



begins to have strange dreams. In his dreams, he takes on the persona of a Garbadia soldier by the name of Laguna Loire, whose ambition is to become a journalist.

In Squal's waking life, Garbadia, a major force and power in the world, invades Dole, a neighboring country. This sets off a series of events which lead to the declaration of the next world war. The president Garbadia holds a conference to address the people, and from his side, while giving the speech, the "Witch" who was thought to be just a myth, makes an appearance...

It is at this time that Squal is commanded to join a mission with the objective to assassinate the "Witch". Will Squal be able to avoid the "Witch's" threat and destruction? And who is this character, Laguna, who continues to appear in Squal's dreams?

Centering around Squal and Rinoa, Squal's rival, Seifer, and the "Witch", an epic story now begins...

THE PLAYERS:

SQUAL LEONHART: Squal entered the private soldier training academy, "Garden", and had become a soldier of the elite group, "Seed". He isn't very sociable and does not like to say unnecessary things or talk about topics which don't concern him, but he sternly obeys commands and contracts. Since he does not speak much, people's first impressions are that he is antisocial. But, after meeting Rinoa, his personality and attitudes soften. He uses a weapon called a Gunblade, where pulling the trigger ensures destructive power during battle.

RINOA HEARTILLY: Leader of the "Forest Owls", an opposition party created against the dictatorship government of Garbadia. Although leader of this group, Rinoa is known to be irresponsible at times, and members within the party can not be depended on all the time. Disliking confinement, Rinoa lives freely and happily, and takes extra care of her friends. She meets Squal in requesting a construction worker from "Garden".

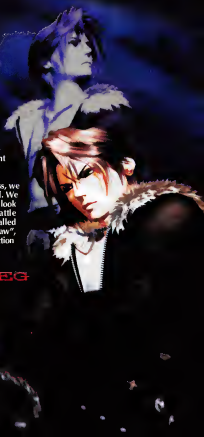
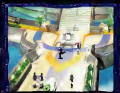
SEIFER ALMASY: Like Squal, Seifer is a student of "Garden". Although he excels at what he does, he is unable to get along with others and work as a team member. Because of his brash attitude and personality, he has yet to become a member of "Seed". Regarding his status, he holds an abnormal sense of rivalry against Squal. He also uses the Gunblade as his weapon of choice. Interested in the stories of the "Witch", he holds romantic dreams of serving her one day.

THE "WITCH": For generations, a particular woman has been chosen to continue to possess the power of a sorceress. This sorceress has continued to appear from time-to-time throughout history. In one generation, she was overcome with the fear of losing power, so she made those who she thought were a threat to her resign. Whereas, in another generation, she helped citizens out in the research of magic. But, after the last generation, the successor did not appear, and only stories of her remained in the minds of the people. Forming an unholy alliance with Garbadia, this witch, Edea, suddenly appeared in front of the people. Will she be the last in the succession of witches?

Since the game came in as we were going to press, we didn't get much play time in before the issue closed. We will return in the following months to take an in-depth look at the amazing visual imagery, as well as the new battle system, focusing on the summoning beast's growth called "Guardian Force", the collection of magic through "Draw", and the combination of magic brought upon by the "Junction System".



GREG





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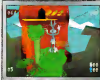
FUTURE.PLAY



SHAO LIN

THQ • JULY

While we still haven't gotten our hands on a playable version of THQ's *Shao Lin*, we at least have some new screens and information to report. As you may have heard, simultaneous four-player fighting is not the only innovation *Shao Lin* promises to offer. The game's non-linear Story Mode is said to be unlike anything PlayStation fighting fans have seen to date. As time progresses through the Story Mode, your character will inevitably grow and mature. Like a creature from a *Tamagotchi*, your character's growth will depend on how you guide him (or her) through life. Numerous factors will affect their development, including the amount of food they consume, fighting successes and failures, and how often the character rests. Also, expect numerous enemies onscreen at one time (allowing for fighting sequences reminiscent of Hong Kong Kung Fu movies), a multi-tap compatible VS. Mode featuring 4-player simultaneous fighting action, a roster of over 50 characters that can be unlocked, and six accurately represented martial arts fighting styles.



DINO CRISIS

CAPCOM • 4TH QUARTER

From the producer and developers of *Resident Evil* comes a new brand in the survival horror category. The game takes place in the not so distant future on this island. As Begina, a member of a special force operative team, you and your team of government agents have orders to capture the Professor who is conducting experiments on the island and seize the details of his research. Once a tropical paradise, the island now runs rampant with carnivorous dinosaurs, including Raptors and T-Rex's that haven't roamed the earth in millions of years. Your mission is simple: find the Professor, get off the island ALIVE and discover if there is any relation between his experiment and the dinosaurs. *Dino Crisis* promises to show major advancements in the survival horror genre. The enemies in the game are extremely detailed, fully rendered dinosaurs with the amazing ability to stalk, attack and toy with their human prey. The game makes use of fully 3D polygonal environments, which allow players to interact in real time with their surroundings and, in addition, will feature advanced light sourcing and graphical improvements which add to its realistic look and feel.



LOST IN TIME

INFOGRAMES • MAY

Here are the latest shots of Infogrames' *Lost in Time* starring Bugs Bunny. We were recently treated to the latest demo of the game and it's coming along quite nicely. If you missed the EXclusive preview back in our February issue, *Lost in Time* is the first of a series of Looney Tunes games planned for the PlayStation. The game follows the antics of good ol' Bugs as he makes his way through time in order to get back home to the safety of his hole in the ground. The game is being developed by Megatoon Studios, the creators and developers of *Jersey Devil*, and is played out in huge, free-roaming 3D environments. Mixing action platforming with plenty of mission-based puzzle solving, *Lost in Time* promises to pack in plenty of features. Bugs will be able to run, jump, pick up items, butt-bounce them, kick enemies and, of course, burrow under the ground. The game will also include a who's who of WB favorites, including Yosemite Sam, Daffy Duck, Marvin the Martian and Elmer Fudd.

EXPERECTING

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Deep Cover Gecko



- All-new intuitive camera system guides you through hazardous 3D missions
- Over 25 all-new disguises with new abilities like scuba diving and snowboarding
- Baywatch's Marlice Andrada stars as Agent Xtra in all-new full-motion video
- An all-new GEX spits fireballs, controls tanks, crocodiles, burros and more
- Over 1,000 all-new celebrity impressions and wisecracks



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FUTURE.PLAY

EVIL ZONE

TITUS • MAY



While Superman might not be anywhere in sight, Titus does have Evil Zone, a sharp-looking 3D fighter to hold us over until the Man of Steel's pending PlayStation release. Evil Zone is actually an already-released, import Japanese fighter that's been picked up by Titus and is currently being localized for the US market. Developed by Yuke's, this 3D fighter will offer a unique perspective on the typical fighting game, in that it offers a multitude of unique camera movements and angles during game play, giving it a fast, furious and exciting feel. In addition, the game's graphic engine is displayed in the PlayStation's medium high-resolution mode and, with what's become typical of most fighting games these days, runs at a super-fast 60 frames per second. Evil Zone mixes hand-to-hand combat with weapons and players can choose from a total of ten different fighters. The game also features a variety of deadly weapons from which to choose, blazing graphic effects, alternate costumes for each character, a new, cutting-edge musical soundtrack featuring (to be announced) popular alternative bands, and five different play modes: Story, One Player, Vs., Survival and Practice. Evil Zone is set to ship to retail stores sometime between April and May, with a MSRP of \$39.99.

IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTICE

PlayStation® Game Console Consumer Advisory

Electrical Power Cords

Sony Computer Entertainment America (SCEA) and the Consumer Safety Commission have received a very small number of reports of potential shock hazards related to the failure of the electrical power cord for the PlayStation game console. While the incidents are rare and have been isolated, SCEA would prefer to err on the side of caution and urges parents to inspect the electrical cord that attaches to the PlayStation game console. If the connector on the electrical cord that plugs into the game console is cracked or broken in any way, please discontinue use of the cord immediately and contact a SCEA Customer Service Representative at 1-877-665-7669. SCEA will replace the cord without charge. If you are unsure whether there is a problem with the electrical cord, please do not hesitate to contact a Customer Service Representative at the same number.



Can you land a lunger? There's no need to exaggerate the size of your skill, with Fisherman's Bait you can prove it! Number One Rated arcade game now on PlayStation® Two player versus mode - fish against a friend. Dual Shock function lets you feel the bass biting

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GEX³

DEEP COVER GECKO

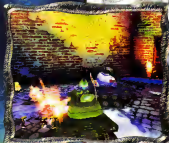


Hi. My name is Dave and I'm a GEX-aholic. There, I feel much better now. And, in this day of political correctness and plausible deniability ("I didn't inhale", "it depends on what your definition of 'is' is," I did not have sexual relations with that woman!"), you must now applaud my conviction and recognize me in taking responsibility for my actions. Yes, I understand that the pleasure of GEX is a vice but, really, who am I hurting? Crash and Croc have both forgiven me and Sir Don and Spyro are coming around.

As most of you know, I was (and am) a big fan of GEX: Enter the Gecko — the go-anywhere action/platform tour-de-force from Crystal Dynamics released in early 1998. It's been one year since Enter the Gecko was released and it's time for a lizard upgrade! 1999 is, last time I checked my calendar, a new year — a year that finds Crystal under the umbrella of Eidos and with a new GEX title ready for market:

GEX 3: Deep Cover Gecko

GEX's new adventure finds our hero embroiled in another battle with his arch-enemy, Rez (who, you may recall, revealed to GEX that he was, in fact, GEX's father, at the end of Enter the Gecko). As always, the game is played out in the Media Dimension, where anything can happen and level design is only limited by the designers' imagination(s). New to the GEX cast are Miss Monners, played by Boywatch's (does any EMPLOYED person actually watch this show?) Marielce Andrada, who does kind of a '90's version



EXTREME

of Bond's Monney Penny, and GEX's butler, Alfred, who helps GEX make it through the game with timely gameplay hints. (Presumably, he also helps GEX in and out of his many costumes and dusts the GEX cave.)

That's right, GEX has a new center of operations, complete with training facilities. This is where level entrances are accessed.

By my count, there are 24 unique levels in the game, including secret levels and bonus levels. The gameplay picks up where the last game left off, with a few noteworthy changes. The remote control system has been changed significantly. In *Enter the Gecko*, there were red exit remotes and two different silver remotes (hidden and collectible) per level, and gold remotes that were awarded for beating boss and bonus levels. In *Deep Cover Gecko*, only the red exit remotes remain. While the game features a number of secret and bonus levels, they are now accessed by collecting coins, specifically: Pow, Fly and Bonus coins. New levels are still unlocked by getting red remotes. New levels/costumes in *Deep Cover Gecko* include: costume changes that put GEX back in the old west, ancient Greece, in the middle of Roaring '20's Chicago, taking Jock's place on the beaustalk, partying with Rudolph as he works on his red nose in a Christmas nightmare, re-living GEX's experiences in 'nori, cavorting with pirates on the Caribbean, and many more.

While the basic gameplay remains intact, there have been a number of additions designed to bring more variety to the game. GEX can now ride a burro, a snow board, inside a kangaroo's pouch and a gator, and even drive a tank. In addition, many levels have machine guns and other weapons that GEX can use to his advantage. In one level, tentatively titled "Clueless", GEX is cast in the role of a Sherlock Holmes-style detective where, every time you use the look around feature, a magnifying glass will appear in GEX's field of vision. While it doesn't actually magnify anything, it allows

GEX to find the three secret objects in the level that allow him to play the three mini-games (accomplishing this allows GEX to collect one of the three exit remotes to be found in the level).

And, of course, there is the humor of Dano Gould, back for his third gig as the voice of GEX. Crystal promises over 1,000 new one-liners, wisecracks and celebrity impersonations for *Deep Cover Gecko*. From the small taste I've had so far, I think it is safe to say that you are going to feel a strong Austin Powers influence in the new game. Then, there is the music. I thought the music in *Enter the Gecko* was pretty good, but the guys look like they've outdone themselves this time. In the 15 or so levels that I have been able to play adequately, the music has been unique to each level, with a lot of variety. There are very few games where music contributes that much to gameplay. GEX: *Deep Cover Gecko* is one of the few. While there is quite a bit of last minute polishing and tweaking to be done, GEX: *Deep Cover Gecko* is looking to be a worthy addition to the GEX catalogue of games. I'll be back with a review of the game next month.

DAVE



EXCLUSIVE

PSYGNOSIS' 1999/2000 PLAYSTATION LINEUP

In addition to Reflections, Psygnosis has chosen '99 as the year they return to their roots and what has made them successful since the beginning of the PlayStation's existence. This year, expect to see a number of sequels to some of their most popular, long-running titles. In addition to some of their newer franchises, such as the venerable *Galaxy Wars*, as well as some interesting PC ports in conjunction with Microsoft, we will finally get third additions to both the *Wipeout* and *Destruction Derby* franchises. Below, you'll find a first-look list at their product line-up for '99 and beyond. While it's still a bit early to show screens of any of these upcoming titles, this is the first information Psygnosis is giving out. We'll keep you posted as more becomes available.

WIPEOUT 3:

Conscious of the unique and futuristic racing experience that *Wipeout* represents, Psygnosis has closely guarded the heritage of the original in creating the third installment. Bringing back together key members of the *Wipeout* team, they are well on their way to delivering a third-generation sequel. Amongst a host of new key features being implemented into the game, *Wipeout 3* will include eight new circuits, with three new teams (in addition to the five that were available in *Wipeout XL*), enhanced game modes and Dual Shock compatibility. Paramount in recreating the *Wipeout* experience will be the graphics, which are being pushed to new heights, making for a trip as beautiful as it is deadly. The setting for the game is still in the future, although this time it will center around Hong Kong. The tracks will retain their roller-coaster feel and are said to range from F-Zero-type wide tracks to really fast, extreme tracks with loops, corkscrews, jumps, etc. The game will be a bit more scaleable than the previous *Wipeouts* (there will be some easy training-type levels to begin with, in order to soften the learning curve) but, at the other end of the spectrum, there will be some extremely tough levels to ensure that hard-core gamers are still adequately challenged. A few other notable features for *Wipeout 3* include a first-ever two-player split-screen mode and four new weapons to pick up and utilize. Avid fans of the series can rest assured that the look, sounds and appearance of *Wipeout* will remain unblemished with Designer's Republic once again reprising their role as art directors and a fresh techno soundtrack from a variety of today's popular artists. There is no official release date for the title as of yet, but it is slated to appear later this year.

G.POLICE: WEAPONS OF JUSTICE:

From the developers of *Assault Rigs* comes the second installment of *G-Police*. This year's version comes with a roster of ambitious features and improvements that promise to make this game a memorable event. Picking up ten days after the first, *Weapons of Justice* continues the struggle between the Nanosoft resistance and the *G-Police*. This year's model offers a host of new vehicles at your command (both air and ground), improved controls, new weapons, enemies and environments, and an improved graphic engine. Of all of Psygnosis' recently announced titles, *G-Police* will be the first released, scheduled for a March '99 launch date. We received a previewable version just as we were closing the issue and will be back next month with either a review or an in-depth, comprehensive preview.

DESTRUCTION DERBY 3:

Unfortunately, there is no official gameplay information regarding Psygnosis' third *Destruction Derby*. We can assume it will continue the unique mixture of racing and wanton car destruction that has made the series so famous. What might be unfortunate, is most of the original *Destruction Derby* team members have flown the coop and are either working for Pitbull (developers of Accolade's last two Test Drive titles) or moved on with Reflections (who are putting the final touches on GT Interactive's *Driver*). In any event, we have faith that Psygnosis will strive to maintain the quality and flavor of the original while updating it for the next generation of PlayStation software. *Destruction Derby 3* should be available by the end of the year, or the beginning of the next.

EXTREME



MOTORTOX MADNESS:

In conjunction with Microsoft, Psygnosis will be converting some of their more popular PC titles over to the PlayStation; Microsoft Madness is the first. Get ready to kick in across fully asphaltable, realistic 3D terrain (as opposed to restrictive tracks) while pulling off a variety of kick-ass stunts. The game will offer a two-player split screen mode, 13 bikes, and 30 tracks, which range from outdoor and indoor to stunt, quarry and freestyle. Don't expect to see this title until the beginning of next year.

F1 99:

According to the grass release, F1 will return to the cars and tracks of F1 97, while the graphics will undergo a complete overhaul to bring them up to an equal or better quality to the other '99 racing games. Once again, Psygnosis plans to maximize the licensed footage and generally reestablish their F1 as the "pinnacle" of motorsports and the best racing license/simulation available. F1 99 is tentatively scheduled for an October '99 launch.



URBAN ASSAULT:

Microsoft's futuristic real-time strategy/first-person action game combines thoughtful resource management with total destruction. In the game, you will be able to control an army of specialized vehicles to which you can give orders strategically via the in-game map or control directly in first-person mode. While there's no other information available at this time, the game is scheduled to be released Q4 of 2000.

COLONY WARS 3:

The production of the next installment of Colony Wars is already under way with an estimated release date for the first quarter of 2000. This time, instead of siding with the Navy or the League, you play the role of a Han Solo-type mercenary/bounty hunter who's best interests are looking out for yourself. The game will feature a revised mission structure to enhance the game depth: depending upon which missions you select, you may find yourself helping the Navy or the League in the process. The team is planning on refining and enhancing the graphics, if you can believe that — they think they can push the PlayStation even further and make some improvements to the in-game textures. They also are planning to make more use of the quality CG-rendered FMV in the game to create a greater cinematic experience. When all is said and done, Colony Wars 3 will offer a completely new dramatic musical score, performed by a symphonic orchestra, which promises to be as epic as the last one. There will also be a comprehensive selection of customizations and upgrades (ships, for example, will be more upgradeable than they were in Vengeance). In addition, there will be more weapons, a wider use of unique anomalies: adding to the "epic" atmosphere, and a fully interactive space environment. To make the game more accessible to novice players, the developers are including easy training missions at the beginning — they will be part of the main mission tree, but hard-core gamers will be able to skip past them without bypassing any of the mission objectives.



AGE OF EMPIRES:

Another popular Microsoft PC title planned for translation to the PlayStation, Age of Empires is a real-time strategy game in which you must help your tribe evolve from the Stone Age through the next four ages by building, accumulating wealth and fighting opposing forces. Age of Empires is being translated by Distinctive Software, the developers who did the PlayStation conversion of Lemmings. As it stands, Age of Empires will be shipping in the first quarter of 2000.

BUDDIES:

Buddies is a cute and colorful, real-time strategy game in the vein of Lemmings. While there is not much information on this title as of yet, the basic gist of the game will be to produce Buddies, weapons and vehicles by stacking colored crates together in a particular order. Buddies is scheduled to ship in November of this year.



[illegible]

F

ANS GO TO GAMES.

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More than 250 NCAA® Division I teams, real uniforms and real floors. Also real adrenaline, real pressure and real depression after a missed three-pointer for the win.



With Duinn Buckner's play-by-play, he'll be sure to point out a sweet finger roll or pull-up J, but get sloppy and he'll make you feel like a red-shirt freshman.

NCAA
FINAL FOUR
99



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Nothing brings the student body to their feet faster than a soaring dunk over a 6'9" power forward.

RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY NAMCO

GENRE:
RACING
AVAILABLE:
MAY

R4
RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

PLAYS STAY PUT™

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before that! Anyway, a lot of good racing games and franchises have come and gone since Ridge Racer made its debut — let's take a look and see how well Namco has spent their development time, creating the latest in the "Ridge" series, "Ridge Racer Type 4" (R4).

First of all, let's talk about what you get when you buy your limited edition R4 bundle: a R4 game disc, a Jogoon controller, an original Ridge Racer game disc that plays at 60 FPS, and playable demo's of some of the hottest Namco games available (like Tekken 3). Shoot, that's a load of stuff there, Billy Bob, and each piece is worth a separate look. Obviously, the R4 game is the reason to get the bundle in the first place, but there are a lot of folks out there that would argue the Jogoon is worth the price of admission alone. I, however, am not one of them. This new controller basically puts a mini-steering wheel where the two analog sticks would normally be. The device is operated by your left thumb, keeping your left index finger free to use the L1 (shifting) button. Your right hand does the usual right hand things (accelerator or "acceleratrix" as Mr. Burns would say, braking, and camera changes). The Jogoon features a built in force feedback that makes the little wheel shudder when you ram into something, and it violently throws itself back and forth when you spin out of control. The Jogoon is certainly a nifty little accessory, and makes playing the game an entirely different experience.

But, call me "old school" — I like the feel, comfort, and precision of the standard D-pad (you can also use the analog if you so desire). I tried the Jogoon for a couple of hours, but never got totally at ease with it, and my lap times couldn't compare with the times I would achieve when using the D-pad.

Anyone at all familiar with the Ridge Racer series will be able to pick up R4 and instantly have some success. The same two types of cars are there (those that grip and those that power-slide) for your driving pleasure, and the braking and the sliding are just like you remember. The game looks much like Ridge Racer, with its darker colors giving the game a more "grown up"





feel than the bright, arcade style look of the first two Ridge Racer games. There are eight

different tracks in R4, and an astounding 320 cars — but more on that later!

The basic racing premise in R4 is to complete the grand Prix and take home the trophy. First, you pick a racing team (there are four — France, Italy, USA, and Japan), then you pick a car manufacturer (there are also four of these, each represented by the same countries). The teams range in difficulty; France being easiest, USA being expert. The Grand Prix is broken down into three segments, consisting of two races each for the first two phases, then four races in the final segment. You have to come in the top three places to move past the first phase, then in the top two spots in the second and, finally, you have to win each of the four races in the "Final GP" segment. If you don't qualify in one of these spots, you're given four chances to try again. If you still can't do it, then "Game Over", dude.

You are awarded a new car after each of the first two phases, and an additional one after the third race in the Final GP. The significance of the upgrade to your ride will depend on how well you did in the previous races. For instance, in the first stage, if you came in 3rd place after each race, you would get to move on to the second group, but your new car will have a very small increase in its top speed (let's say it increased 10 mph). However, if you win both of those races, then your new car may have an improvement of 20 mph! By the time you finish your first Grand Prix season, you will have amassed a total of four cars, and you'll be given the chance to race the "Boss" car for that manufacturer. Once you beat the Boss car, you'll never have to do it again, but you may find that it takes just the right car in order to win, so it may not be the 4th car you received from team Mappy (France), but may require you to get the 4th car from team Lizard (USA). Go Lizards!

Anyway, after having played more than 20 hours of R4, I've accumulated a total of 35 cars (out of 320, remember?). That's roughly 10%, and to think I've got to play another 180 hours to get the rest of the cars is unthinkable. Shoot, after your third or fourth trip through Grand Prix mode, you'll be winning every race, and trying to stay awake while you do it (about a 45 minute ordeal). Now, granted, nobody does track design or car models as well as Namco (and some of the cars are just unbelievably good looking), but the truth of the matter is that, after you've played a few hours worth, do you really want to spend all of the required time to find a bunch of cars that you race on the same of eight tracks?

The bottom line is that R4 serves up a good ARCADE experience, but Namco's attempt at making it a simulation, in order to keep up with the likes of Gran Turismo, has fallen way short. Unlike GT or other "simulation" type games, R4 doesn't offer the gamer an abundance of challenges, and adding the myriad of cars only adds to the confusion of searching for a challenge. To me (and I gave it a 98%), there wasn't much wrong with Ridge Racer; certainly nothing a couple of additional (and longer) tracks couldn't remedy. R4, while worthy of purchase, should have stayed closer to its "Real Racing Roots".



98%

PS THE BOTTOM LINE EXTREME 90%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1st2 Players
- Audio Controller Compatible
- Visual Feedback Compatible

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LEGEND OF LEGAIA

PUBLISHED BY SONY — DEVELOPED BY CONTRAIL/PROXION

GENRE:
RPG
AVAILABLE:
MARCH



RPG fans rejoice! With many upcoming outstanding titles (including the much anticipated Final Fantasy VIII), 1999 is shaping up to be our kind of year. We're certainly off to a great start. There are a number of RPGs on slate from many different third party companies, as well as Legend of Legaia from SCEA, the publishers of Wild Arms, FF VII,

and SaGa Frontier.

When I first began playing Legend of Legaia, I was basically expecting an updated version of Wild Arms (with the knowledge that the game was, in-part, developed by some of the same team members and producers). While I really enjoyed Wild Arms, I was pleasantly surprised to find that Legend goes way beyond it. Legend of Legaia is more of a combination of Wild Arms and Final Fantasy VII. The fully rendered 3D environments are spectacular, making the cities and landscapes really come alive. The tactical fighting system adds a new feel to the old hack and slash way of defeating your enemy, by enabling you to decide what order of punches and kicks to throw, much like 3D fighting games. If a certain combination is entered, it's possible to uncover one of many "fighting arts"; secret combinations of moves that, when linked together, form a powerful attack. Imagine, if you will, being able to do a limit break at any time with a multitude of possible combinations that can interlink. If you have enough energy, it's possible to chain multiple fighting arts together. Every time you uncover a fighting art, it's then added to a list which can be pulled up at any time during a fight. In addition to the tactical fighting system, the magic system contains spells that resemble the awesome summoning spells we all know and love from FFXVII. What this all translates into is an RPG with the sweetest of eye candy.

Legend of Legaia supports the Dual Shock controller, which really enhances the fighting system. With the appropriate force feedback, you feel all the hits, fighting arts, and magic, which grow stronger as you deliver the more powerful attacks. The game also utilizes the analog thumbstick, allowing you to maneuver easily in the world and dungeons. But, I prefer to use the D-pad because the game defaults to it when you enter a fight. Speaking of fights, this brings me to my first complaint: The fight encounter





rate seems, in my opinion, just a little too high. Expect to run into attacks

about every ten steps or so, translating into a somewhat frustrating experience when you are just trying to get from town to town or fulfill a sub-quest.

In terms of the storyline and setting, Legend of Legaia presents an involving yet simple plot that just about anyone can get into. It starts off in the tiny village of Rim where the hero, Vahn, has to protect his family and friends by defeating the invading monsters that live in an evil and mysterious myst. By reviving the town's decaying Genesis tree, he discovers their power against the mist, and decides to set out on a quest to save the world by finding and reviving all of them. Along the way, he meets up with two other companions: Noa, an orphan raised by a talking wolf and Gala, a fighting monk. The main

theme is the quest to find the Genesis Trees, with a couple of mini-games and sub-missions to accomplish along the way.

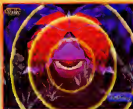
Legend of Legaia starts off pretty linear — with only one way to go and specific missions to accomplish — but, as you progress further, you'll find this is more like a tutorial to introduce players to the different systems and play mechanics of the game. Once you advance to the next section of the world, the game becomes much more non-linear, allowing you to go to any city you want.

As the game progresses, certain objectives must be accomplished in order to continue the storyline, and certain events unfold which play a big part in the development of the story.

The dungeons start off relatively easy, but get progressively harder. Not until the third dungeon or so, do you have to start to really worry about mapping them out. The puzzles also progress in a similar fashion, with the typical, "search for the key to a certain door" type in the beginning, to finding the right sequence on a gateway (pretty hard) later on. This learning curve allows first time RPG players to progress without getting stuck early on, while giving experienced RPG players a satisfying run for their money.

Legaia has the makings of a top ten game and, with its early March release, it'll keep hard-core RPG players happy and satisfied. You can easily get lost in the game's story and find yourself with 50 hours racked up before you know it. I would also definitely recommend this game to any of the younger players out there. It's a nice title to start with because there is no adult content to really worry about and the game guides you by the hand in the beginning. As a whole, Sony's Legend of Legaia should offer

a great experience for both old school and new comers to the RPG genre with a solid story, a great new tactical fighting system and a very, very nice graphic presentation. Check it out!



RAL

PS THE BOTTOM LINE EXTREME 94%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 Player
- Asynchronous Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

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POINT BLANK 2

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY NAMCO

GENRE:
GUN GAME
AVAILABLE:
NOW



I have a reputation as the guy who always throws in a classic game reference in each review. So as not to disappoint you, here it is: In the late 1970's, before pizza parlors discovered videogames, they featured another form of electronic entertainment (pipe organs don't count). A large screen on the wall showed three hunters aiming at the sky. With the aid of a brick-sized remote

control box, you pressed the button to fire a shot as a clay pigeon passed over the appropriate shooter. People who subsequently wouldn't touch a videogame nevertheless enjoyed this target game, which soon faded into obscurity.

What does this have to do with Point Blank 2? Well, it too is a target shooting game that is bound to appeal to people who don't know their triangle button from their R2 button. After all, not everyone knows how to use a PlayStation controller, but almost everyone can point a gun at the screen and pull a trigger. You can still use the standard controller, however. Then again, you could also use chopsticks to eat soup, but that doesn't mean it is a good idea. This game is definitely meant for a light gun.

There is no blood and guts to be found. Instead, Point Blank 2 has 78 different challenges in categories such as rapid fire (shoot an object 40 times in 30 seconds), single shot (hit a tossed coin), brain teasers (add two numbers and shoot the sum), defense (prevent objects from reaching a target), and gangster (identify and shoot bad guys without hitting bystanders). I haven't the space to list all the variations in the 11 categories, but suffice it to say that there are a whole lotta games here!

Depending upon the type of game, you may have a limited amount of ammunition. You will always have a limited amount of time to achieve the goal. Some games also give the player a penalty for hitting incorrect targets. If you fail to reach your goal in the allotted time, you lose one of the three life "hearts" you start with. You also lose a heart for each penalty assessed. At the end of each game, you are given a score based upon the number of hits, accuracy, and speed.

The manner in which the various types of games are presented is determined by the mode selected. The Training Mode allows you to pick from any type of game, on four difficulty levels, and also gives you a graph of your performance. The Party Mode lets multiple players compete in a tournament (everyone for themselves) or in a team battle (up to 4 teams of 2





players each) consisting of the various shooting games chosen at random.

The Point Blank Castle is the heart of the game. In the Versus Mode, you can play the games in any order against another player or solo. In the Endurance Mode, you try to complete as many of these games as you can before losing three hearts. The games are always presented in the same order. Finally, there is the Arcade Mode in which one or two players compete to see who can win the majority of 16 games randomly chosen by the computer. Once again, you can set the difficulty level for Practice (fewer games), Beginner, Advanced, or Insane—the category formerly known as “Very Hard.” Your score determines whether you win, lose, or draw each game and the player who wins the most will prevail.

Game is the odd RPG-like Quest mode of the original. In its place is the Theme Park Mode, which has a similar idea but better execution. In this mode, you explore four areas of a theme park searching for a princess. The story is told through text boxes and anime-style graphics. Your light gun is generally used to maneuver through each area. At various intervals you must play a game chosen by the computer. If you beat each game, completing the area, you will receive a ranking, a weapon power-up, and a clue. After all four areas are clear, you face a final challenge before being given the opportunity to identify the princess using the clues you earned. Sounds strange, and it is, but it is definitely an improvement over the prior version.

Now comes the part where I criticize the game. I was going to complain about the fact that there is no counter to let you know how close you are to reaching your goal. However, part of the excitement of the game is blasting away until the counter reaches zero and only then discovering if you managed to hit enough targets (or if you hit more than your opponent). There is a lot of loading going on, since each individual game has to be accessed separately, but this doesn't take very long. I also don't like the Don and Dan characters very much, as they look like evil Muppets.

Yes, friends, this is a first. I don't have anything bad to say about the game. If you don't like shooting games, or prefer them to be more violent, there is obviously nothing here for you. The expense of buying two light guns for the multi-player game, let alone a large enough television to experience the game in its glory, might be prohibitive. Finally, as the original Point Blank is also a very good game, its owners probably aren't yet tired enough of the prior game variations to want 76 new ones.

Once again I find myself in the position of reviewing a sequel to a game originally reviewed by the late Thomas J. And, once again, I would have given the original a slightly higher score. Seeing as how the sequel is just as good if not even better, I believe it deserves a gold. Point Blank 2 has more replay value than any other shooter and is simply one of the best party games available for the PlayStation.



MARK

PS THE BOTTOM LINE EXTREME

88%

COMPATIBILITY



Once again I find myself in the position of reviewing a sequel to a game originally reviewed by the late Thomas J. And, once again, I would have given the original a slightly higher score. Seeing as how the sequel is just as good if not even better, I believe it deserves a gold. Point Blank 2 has more replay value than any other shooter and is simply one of the best party games available for the PlayStation.



GUARDIAN'S CRUSADE

PUBLISHED BY ACTIVISION — DEVELOPED BY TAMSOFT

GENRE:
RPG
AVAILABLE:
NOW



Imagine: A knight, giant crabs, malfunctioning robots, living toys, a baby monster, and some crazy fairies — can all these things possibly exist in the same world? The answer, “yes,” all thanks to Activision's Guardian's Crusade. The first RPG-meets-virtual-pet game available for the PSX.

The gist of the story is this — a brave, young knight (aptly named Knight) gets called upon to do an errand for the mayor. Upon completing this simple task, he meets up with a tiny pink baby monster (Baby) that looks to be a direct offspring of Barney. And, like Barney, Baby loves Knight. So Knight and Baby set off on a series of adventures that lead to Baby's home, and then, eventually, like any good RPG, the opportunity to save the world from utter destruction.

The story is simple enough, as is the gameplay. The interface is very straightforward with all the standard RPG elements. The only thing missing is magic. Instead, Knight collects “Living Toys”. Now, I would go as far as to dub these “magic” because I’ll be a chicken’s uncle if such toys exist without some kind of magic. The toys are plentiful (somewhere in the neighborhood of 70) and they are easy enough to collect as they are scattered throughout the land and seemingly every townsfolk Knight comes across gives him one.

Guardian's Crusade moves along quickly; it drew me in fast and continued along briskly. There are no real sub-quests and most of the objectives take in the range of about an hour or so to accomplish. Having Baby and the fairy, Nehani, around are also a great help. As Knight runs around the worlds, all the enemies are visible as ghosts and upon meeting up with the ghosts, the game warps into a battle screen. The fights are turn-based and, thanks to Baby and the living toys, there are a fair amount of different battle tactics available.

I found it extremely easy (and rewarding) to play defensively and build up Knight's HP with the aid of Baby and some helpful toys. Or, Knight can attack using Baby's transformations and a couple toys that do major damage. There are few things in life that





can match the experience of watching living toys do battle. The two toys I wish I could have had as a kid: Mr. O'Neal — a strange looking chap who beats enemies with his baton, and Ringsider (my personal favorite) — gives play-by-play commentary of the battles as if it were the heavyweight championship bout of the century. He doesn't do any damage but he'll chat your ear off, a-la a good Tyson match.

Part of the draw of the crusade is the Tamagotchi-style of gameplay it introduces. With Baby being a young monster, Knight has to act as a role model — playing fetch, feeding, and just chatting with Baby to make it feel special. And, the happier Baby is, the more it will help.

As far as the RPG elements of Guardian's Crusade are concerned, they are all pulled off well. The music is standard fare, not outstanding, yet at the same time it drew me in. A really nice feature of the game is the use of Nehani to help Knight keep on track. During any point in the game, Knight can ask Nehani "Wus' up?" and, in turn, receive direction as to what objective he should be pursuing. This is awesome if you are going to be playing this game over a long period of time, because you can just pick it up and ask Nehani where you left off. She's got the memory of an elephant.

Graphically, the game does well in offering bright atmospheric environments, some decent anime style cut scenes, and nice 3D characters and battles. There is a choice of two camera styles, auto camera where the view will automatically rotate behind Knight, or a manual camera where the shoulder buttons rotate the camera. The manual method makes searching for items easy and is a snap to get used to. Lastly, Guardian's Crusade actually takes full advantage of the Sony Dual Shock! Battles are vibration enhanced and there is excellent analog control for walking/running around the worlds.

My only complaint is that Knight doesn't always point the way I would have liked him to, which can make it difficult to check an item or location. But, rotating the camera around can usually solve this minor problem. And some, though not all, may find the story too simplistic. (It is not very deep by any means); but, that doesn't mean that it isn't fun.

All in all, Guardian's Crusade is a great RPG that doesn't take itself too seriously. Hard core RPG fans may welcome the change of pace and humor, while others will be able to pick it up and have a good time. It has lots of areas to explore, tons of characters to interact with, an enjoyable story, the opportunity to raise a baby monster, and the guidance of a wacky fairy. Plus, it's just plain fun.



Item List	Abilities	Quests	Items
1. Knight's Sword 2. Knight's Shield 3. Knight's Hat 4. Knight's Boots 5. Knight's Gloves 6. Knight's Tunic 7. Knight's Pants 8. Knight's Shoes 9. Knight's Socks 10. Knight's Undershorts	1. Knight's Sword 2. Knight's Shield 3. Knight's Hat 4. Knight's Boots 5. Knight's Gloves 6. Knight's Tunic 7. Knight's Pants 8. Knight's Shoes 9. Knight's Socks 10. Knight's Undershorts	1. Knight's Sword 2. Knight's Shield 3. Knight's Hat 4. Knight's Boots 5. Knight's Gloves 6. Knight's Tunic 7. Knight's Pants 8. Knight's Shoes 9. Knight's Socks 10. Knight's Undershorts	1. Knight's Sword 2. Knight's Shield 3. Knight's Hat 4. Knight's Boots 5. Knight's Gloves 6. Knight's Tunic 7. Knight's Pants 8. Knight's Shoes 9. Knight's Socks 10. Knight's Undershorts

PS THE BOTTOM LINE

COMPATIBILITY



Guardian's Crusade is a great RPG that doesn't take itself too seriously. Hard core RPG fans may welcome the change of pace and humor, while others will be able to pick it up and have a good time. It has lots of areas to explore, tons of characters to interact with, an enjoyable story, the opportunity to raise a baby monster, and the guidance of a wacky fairy. Plus, it's just plain fun.



DILLION

STREET SK8ER

PUBLISHED BY EA — DEVELOPED BY MICRO CABIN

GENRE:
SKATEBOARDING
AVAILABLE:
NOW



FROM STREET OUTDOOR

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I never got to grind my skateboard down handrails when I was young. It isn't just that no one had thought of the idea, but the boards of the time were skinny, hard pieces of fluorescent-colored plastic which weren't meant for aerial acrobatics. For those of us who missed out, here comes Street Sk8er.

Like many of the games I've been playing recently, Street Sk8er has a decent concept but fails to deliver. In my opinion, there are two ways a game can disappoint: either it fails to provide options which would have made the game better, or the game "as is" needs more technical polish. In this case, both apply.

Let's start with the missing options. A skateboarding game like this screams out for analog control. No such luck. You want a two-player split-screen contest? Sorry! You'll have to take turns instead. How about an editor to change deck graphics? Nope. There are custom designs from Powell Skateboards, Etnier, and Warp Magazine, but you cannot create and save your own designs (I hope you like skulls, since that seems to be the most common motif). On a more substantial note, there are only three courses to try, along with the requisite half pipe, bowl, and big air bonus events. Although you are able to skate through the courses at different times of the day or in a mirror mode once you've completed the game, this doesn't add enough variety.

Assuming that these limitations don't bother you, the game falls short in other areas. Graphically, the game is adequate but can't compare to the current generation of hi-res games running at 60 fps. In other words, it looks like an older PlayStation title. Street Sk8er is also marred by clipping and collision detection problems. Your view can be obscured by fences, sometimes the benches you need to grind on disappear from view, and you can also see through walls when close enough. At times, I passed right through signs and landed on fences without getting knocked down, while other times these objects were solid and caused me to crash.

The game's camera does a decent job, but in a few instances you will be unable to see where you are about to land. For example, at the end of a half pipe I needed to head up a ramp into the next area. Only upon landing my last trick to face the exit did I realize that I was heading towards a concrete wall instead. Unfortunately, you cannot rotate or move the camera and neither can you zoom in or out. The game does provide direc-





tional arrows pointing to the next checkpoint in case you get disoriented, but this doesn't help you to judge where barriers and obstacles are while you are in mid-air.

Another problem has to do with figuring out what structures can be utilized for tricks. Handrails are obvious, as are benches, but what about planters and short walls? You can grind on some of them but not others, and the only way to find out is through trial and error (with a 500 point deduction for every error). Although the game appears to be free-roaming, it is not. Try to jump over a fence, for example, and your character will be knocked down—even though he or she is clearly higher than the fence. If, after catching big air on a ramp, you are about to land "out of bounds," the game will push your character back onto the track. Sometimes the barriers are obvious, but not always. It looks like you can grind along the edge of the fountains at the beginning of the New York track, for example, but you'll crash if you try.

York track, for example, but you'll crash if you try.

Unlike the majority of racing games which require you to hit a button to accelerate, in *Street Sk8er* your character moves automatically. You can stop temporarily by holding a button, but you cannot turn while stopped. Characters also cannot turn sharply and there is no 180 degree move. This means that if you find yourself in a corner, it is difficult to maneuver out of it. If you miss an object to grind on or a ramp to jump off, it is difficult to go back (and, of course, you also lose time). If you fail to reach a checkpoint in time, the game ends. On the other hand, if you fail to perform enough tricks you won't be allowed to go on to the next course.

Finally, and this is my biggest complaint, the tricks are disappointing. It isn't that you can't perform a lot of them—it's just that they happen pretty much automatically. All you do is hit the jump button while pushing in one of four directions. The trick you perform depends upon your speed, the ramp you are jumping on, and the direction you press. The higher the skill level of your character, the more impressive the tricks—but you always perform them in the same fashion. You cannot turn or orient your character in mid-air, nor do you need to do anything to land correctly. At least with games such as *EXtreme* and *Cool Boarders* you had to press the buttons for tricks while the character was in mid-air. Here, there is little skill involved.

Street Sk8er is not without merit. It lets you catch some serious air, which is a thrill, and the replay feature gives you a great view of the tricks. I liked the soundtrack in spite of myself, and I appreciated being able to allocate points to improve my character's jumping power, cornering ability, maximum speed, and acceleration. However, the game is far too short—even after opening gates to access additional areas within each course. With no analog support, no two-player simultaneous play, stiff control, clipping and collision problems, and the general lack of skill involved in performing tricks, I just can't recommend the game beyond a rainy day rental.



MARK

PS THE BOTTOM LINE EXTREME

79%

COMPATIBILITY



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TAI FU

PUBLISHED BY ACTIVISION — DEVELOPED BY DREAMWORKS

GENRE:
ACTION/PLATFORM
AVAILABLE:
NOW



Take 1 part beat-em-up, mix in two parts platformer, drop in a little Kung-Fu and toss in some pretty visuals for good measure; Blend well, shake (don't even consider stirring) and the result will be something similar to Tai Fu. Part action game, part platformer, Tai Fu mixes the best elements of different genres to the benefit of the gamer. Difficult to

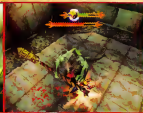
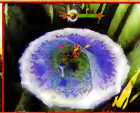
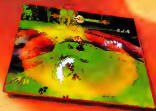
categorize, but easy to pick up and play, Tai Fu has a strange appeal that just keeps you coming back for more.

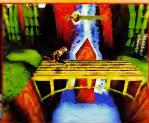
Set in ancient China, when animals were intelligent and roamed the earth on their hind legs, the game follows Tai Fu, a loner who is the only survivor of the Tiger Clan. The clan was killed by the Dragon King in his quest for ultimate rule of the earth. Because Tai Fu is the key to defeating the Dragon King, he was raised in secret by another clan. This lasted until the Dragon King discovered Tai Fu and came after him. With his home destroyed, Tai Fu sets out to defeat the Dragon King and free the world. The story is a bit convoluted, but it works.

The world of Tai Fu is a polygon land, with environments that are vaguely similar to those in the Crash Bandicoot series. One large difference between the two is Tai Fu's ability to roam freely about the land. This free roaming is a nice touch because the player never feels restricted or forced down a particular path. Not to say there isn't a definite track to follow through the level, there is, but no more so than what is necessary to keep the player from wandering around aimlessly.

Level design is well done and provides a consistent level of difficulty throughout the game. There are never too many enemies on screen at once, but there will be just enough to provide a challenge. Enemies will also continuously regenerate in certain places. This keeps the player moving along, because waiting around will result in a steady stream of opponents.

Each level has a distinct look and gives the player a feeling of "being there." For example, the first level occurs in the temple ruins. From there, you progress into the jungle and make your way up a mountain to another temple. The environment changes subtly as you move through the level and conveys the idea of progression, without having to smack you over the head with it. A variety of





enemies can be found in each level, but they always appear to be "natives." Never once did an enemy seem out of place.

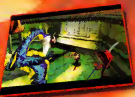
Movement with the analog pad is smooth and feels quite natural. The number of different moves is more limited than one might find in a full fledged fighting game, but what is here is more than adequate. Tai Fu manages the number of moves available to the player by limiting the amount that can be executed by the player.

When the game begins, you can only perform a few basic fighting maneuvers, enough to get through the first section of the game, but woefully inadequate in the later levels. In order to survive you must learn new moves. These moves are taught to you every time you reach a martial arts master. A master can be found every few levels. Each time a new set of moves is learned, they are slightly more powerful than the last. By the end of the game, you will have quite an arsenal built-up.

Another interesting aspect of the game involves power-up items. Limited use items, such as a cloaking power-up, have an energy bar that slowly decreases as time goes by. When the energy is gone, the item is lost. It is possible to refill the energy bar on-the-fly by taking out enemies with special moves. With a little practice, you'll be able to make a power-up that would normally last only a few seconds stay active for a minute or more. A very useful technique, to be sure.

The only complaint I had with Tai Fu had to do with the cinema scenes. Voice acting is always a hard thing to do, and it was passable, but it could have been better. The visuals however, needed a bit of work. Created with the game engine, the cinema scenes were rendered on the fly, and everything just seemed slightly out of sync. Maybe it had something to do with the game's Kung-Fu theme, but it ended up being more distracting than anything else.

As a whole, Tai Fu is a game worth playing simply because it is fun. At first glance, the game appears to be yet another uninspired clone with pretty graphics but, if one looks a little deeper (and ignores the cinema scenes), a gem of a game is uncovered. It's not perfect, but it is enjoyable and that's what really matters. If you see this one on the shelf, pick it up and give it a try. Tai Fu isn't going to replace Crash anytime soon, but it is definitely worth playing.



ADAM

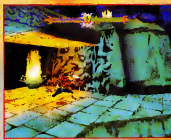
PS THE BOTTOM LINE EXTREME

92%

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 Player
- Analog Controller Compatible
- Navigation Function Compatible

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EXTRA ATTENTION

FISHERMAN'S BAIT

PUBLISHED AND DEVELOPED BY KONAMI

GENRE:
FISHING
AVAILABLE:
NOW



What can you say about fishing games? You either like 'em or you don't! They don't exactly sell a ton of units and generally don't represent the best use of technology. There isn't a lot of boundary crossing in this particular genre of video games, rarely selling outside of the target demographic. Interestingly enough, however, there are

a number of fishing games currently available for the PlayStation and more are on the way. Why, you ask? Well, simply put, you can't just buy one. You know who you are, if you buy fishing games, you buy every one. It's not like a baseball game, where you might buy two, but never three. Fishing fans buy every fishing game that comes out, guaranteeing a certain minimum sell-through. Enter Konami and Fisherman's Bait, a direct translation of a very popular arcade game in Japan.

When I mentioned this was an arcade game, I meant that in the strictest definition of the word, there are no sim elements to be found in this game. If you are a fan of this genre, you'll undoubtedly recognize Fisherman's Bait as the first true arcade style fishing game to hit the PlayStation. The game is set up like most fishing titles, except the emphasis is on time and not necessarily just fishing. The way it works is like this; once you put yourself in the tournament mode, you must first qualify to enter the final rounds. You do this by catching a Bass, weighing at least a pound, within a 90 second time frame. The problem is that there are other fish besides Bass in the lake. Those stupid Cat Fish and Blue Gills constantly get in the way. Given the fact that you have very little time to reel in the big one, staying away from these other fish is paramount. How do you do this, you ask? Simple; once you hook a fish, you'll see it in the picture-in-a-picture. If it's not a bass, just let the tension go as high as it can and try to snap the line. Or, you can reel it in and, depending on the size, at least earn a few extra seconds on your time. You control the choice of bait and the direction and distance of your cast. There is a mini-screen in the top left-hand corner that shows the performance of the lure, so you can see the fisherman and the strikes and hits on the line at the same time. Once you hook a fish, your Dual Shock will begin to vibrate and a tension meter



Largemouth Bass 20.144 6.400 1'5"	Largemouth Bass 20.144 6.400 1'5"	36 10.00 10.00 10.00	95.9 10.00 10.00 10.00
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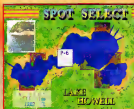


will appear on the right of the screen indicating relative tension. You can reel the big one in either by rotating the analog stick back and forth or by using the standard pad. The analog works very well as you have total control over the speed. If you manage to catch a qualifying Bass and not some other "garbage" fish in the allotted time, you move onto the final rounds.

Once in the final rounds, you must catch as many Bass as you can in the ten minute round. The top three fish will be measured for the competition. If you qualify, you'll move onto the next lake; three in all. Each lake has a variety of different spots that you can choose to fish in and, as always, you'll have a complete tackle box full of the standard Bass fishing lures to try. You can change colors as you see fit. Although it is an arcade style game, there is still quite a bit of strategy to be found in *Fisherman's Bait*, as the clock is ever present. Unlike all of the other fishing games, catching the fish isn't the problem, it's catching the right kind of fish, in sufficient quantity, in a short period of time, that will ultimately determine your success.

It's no surprise to anyone who knows me that I love fishing games, but I must admit, I approached *Fisherman's Bait* with a fair amount of skepticism. I really didn't feel that there was anywhere to go with the genre. Needless to say, I've been pleasantly surprised. The graphics have a nice blend of rendered backgrounds and 3D gameplay, the Dual Shock works flawlessly and the sound is terrific. The picture-in-a-picture fish view keeps the action coming and allows you to concentrate on the fish that matter, saving you valuable time in the process. The multiple fishing hole set up within each lake also adds to the shelf-life, as it allows for a variety of different experiences. Ultimately, this may be the first fishing game that appeals to people other than the intended market.

In the end, *Fisherman's Bait* is a quality title that stands out in a number of areas. The action is quick, keeping your attention level at all times. The user interface is simple to master and logical in all respects and the sound truly brings home the arcade heritage of the title. If you're a fan, you will buy this game. If you've never played a fishing game, this is the one to try. It's still not mainstream, but as close as the fishing genre has come in the 32 bit era!



PS THE BOTTOM LINE

COMPATIBILITY

- 1 or 2 Players
- Analog Controls Compatible
- Vibration Function Compatible

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88%



ERUSHDOWN

PUBLISHED BY EA — DEVELOPED BY COREL+MULTIMEDIA

**GENRE:
RACING
AVAILABLE:
NOW**



Although you can't judge a book by its cover, your first impression does affect whether or not you'll actually pick up the book to read it. My first impression of Rushdown didn't make me that anxious to play it. The intro unsuccessfully blends rudimentary computer graphics with FMV of vehicles. The game's music, by a handful of techno bands, wasn't very interesting either. Considering that the

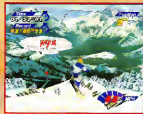
developer was a company I'd never heard of, you can understand my trepidation. Still, I didn't expect that EA would pick up a game like this unless it had some potential. And it does.

Rushdown is a racing game which features three different types of human-powered vehicles: a snowboard, a mountain bike, and a kayak. Each vehicle can be raced in five different locations — Africa, Europe, America, Asia, and Japan — but you have to win a race in one locale before you are allowed to move on to the next. Each course gets progressively more difficult to complete within the allotted time. The name of the game here is time, as Rushdown relies upon a checkpoint system rather than giving the players a number of lives or a vehicle damage meter. You can run into a basilisk boulders or a trillion trees, but as long as you reach the next checkpoint before the timer runs out, the race will continue.

As far as options are concerned, you can challenge the CPU in a championship mode, race the courses alone in an arcade mode, or compete against a human player. There are four on-screen characters to choose from: two males and two females (distinguished solely by slightly "pointier" polygons). However, none of them have differing attributes and you can't change hair, skin, or outfit colors. There are also four equipment variations. You can use a vehicle which is equally balanced, or one which favors either speed, acceleration, or handling.

Rushdown is good, but it could have been even better. You are limited to racing against a single opponent, rather than a pack, and there is no fighting or jostling of any kind. Vehicles do not sustain damage, nor do the riders. The "crash" animation, in fact, is unimpressive. You don't fly from your bicycle or land in a heap and, as a result, the game feels less dangerous. The landscapes, while picturesque, are not interactive. None of the obstacles move and, if there are any hidden shortcuts in the courses, they have been hidden too well for me to find.

In the championship mode, you must beat the computer's best time at the end of three races. Because time is the determining factor, you can win two out of three





racers and still not advance if the computer beats your time by a wide margin in the race you lose. Thankfully, this also works in reverse. As long as you stay fairly close to the CPU in your losing races, you might win the competition if you can get far enough ahead in the final race.

Collision detection seemed unpredictable. There were times when barely grazing a tree would halt me dead in my tracks, while at other times I flew through them with nary a scratch. Colliding with a CPU opponent almost always causes one party to fall while the other continues unimpeded (guess who?). It is also pretty difficult to catch up to the computer. Even if you avoid all the obstacles, you lose time by not steering as precisely as possible.

Although the direction buttons control turning, they don't move you nearly enough. You will need to constantly rely upon the tight turn buttons (which do not work if you are simultaneously holding accelerate). There is also a jump button for the snowboard and bicycle, even though most obstacles cannot be jumped over. The kayak doesn't jump, obviously, but rolls over instead. I have no idea why, since this doesn't help you avoid obstacles. The analog controller is supported, but the feedback needs some fine tuning. Running over railroad tracks produced no rumble, for example, yet the controller would often buzz for no apparent reason—especially in the kayak stage.

The water looks more realistic than in any other PlayStation game, although there is no white water to speak of and your paddles don't even make a splash or spray. The race physics feel realistic enough, as you lose momentum riding uphill for example, and the various equipment attributes definitely affect performance. The replay camera was a nice touch, and the ability to race your best time "ghost" in the arcade mode was appreciated. I also liked the sense of progression that the game provides by increasing the speed and difficulty of subsequent courses. There are some excellent courses, too, such as snowboarding at night in Japan or biking over the Great Wall of China (after Moto Racer and Crash, you would have expected the Chinese to put up "No Trespassing" signs).

Ultimately, however, there is just no feeling of risk. Like a whitewater rapids ride at an amusement park, it looks thrilling but once you try it, you realize that you are just going with the flow. If you can't make it down a hill in time, you can try again indefinitely. I thought that the multi-player mode would add some excitement, but I was wrong. The two-player split screen contest causes significant frame rate slow down and more noticeable draw-in of obstacles and background elements. As you are racing against time more than each other anyway, I'd recommend that two players take turns rather than compete simultaneously.

The bottom line is that Rushdown is not as "extreme" as it first appears. Nor is it as great of a two-player contest as it would seem, but instead works best as a solo

challenge. With some gameplay changes (such as lives/damage, better crashes, and limited fighting), it would definitely have "gold" potential. As it is, however, it is still an enjoyable game with a fair amount of challenge involved.



MARK

PS THE BOTTOM LINE EXTREME

87%

COMPATIBILITY

- 2 Players
- Analog Controller Compatible
- Variable Function Controller

The bottom line is that Rushdown is not as "extreme" as it first appears. Nor is it as great of a two-player contest as it would seem, but instead works best as a solo challenge. With some gameplay changes (such as lives/damage, better crashes, and limited fighting), it would definitely have "gold" potential. As it is, however, it is still an enjoyable game with a fair amount of challenge involved.



BUST-A-MOVE '99

PUBLISHED BY AOCLAIM — DEVELOPED BY TAITO

GENRE:
PUZZLE
AVAILABLE:
MARCH



Time moves very quickly in the gaming world and delays can be deadly. Fans of the Bust A Move puzzle series who have been wondering what happened to the third game in the series should wonder no more. Aoclaim picked up the license to Bust A Move 3 a while back but, unfortunately for them,

the game was delayed for some unknown reason. In the meantime, Natsume beat Aoclaim out the door and released Bust A Move 4, which, it turns out, is a much bigger and better game.

In an attempt to make Bust A Move 3 seem like a new and shiny game, Aoclaim did what any creative publisher would do — they first dusted it off and then they renamed it. Hence, we have Bust A Move 99. Problem is, nothing besides the name has changed. In fact, our reviewable copy of the game only had the new name on the title screen, elsewhere the original title of Bust A Move 3 DX was intact.

If you're new to the whole Bust a Move thing, then allow me to give a quick lesson on the ABC's of bubble busting. The basic gist of the game is to aim your cannon at the bottom of the screen and shoot a variety of randomly colored bubbles at a collection of like-colored bubbles at the top of the screen. Connect three or more of the same-colored bubble and they harmlessly explode and disappear. Connect more than three, or disconnect a cluster of bubbles, and you'll send them over to your competitor's screen next door, giving him a whole heapin' helpin' of bubbles to contend with. Of course, that's easier said than done. The bubbles at the top of the screen are constantly descending toward the bottom of the screen and your opponent(s) (either computer or human) are trying to do the same to you as you are to them. The winner is the one who can survive the longest, keeping the onslaught of bubbles from reaching the bottom of the screen.

The key to Bust a Move (and what makes it all the more appealing and addictive to me), is the introduction of skill





into the mix. With most puzzlers, it's always about knowing which way to rotate your shape or column so it will fit nicely with the rest. But, with Bust A Move, you are required to use a bit of skill, as you have to carefully aim each bubble — sometimes banking them off the sides of the game screen — in order for it to attach to the right set. If you're off even a little bit, you can easily get yourself into an irreversible jam and ultimately lose the game.

One of the additions and a nice feature in Bust A Move 99 is the Edit Mode. This, in conjunction with your memory card, allows you to create your own Bust A Move puzzle levels and then trade them around with friends. Creative players can come up with some nasty level designs with a bit of practice. This is a great way to determine bragging rights.

Unfortunately, Bust A Move 99 is more notable for what it doesn't have than what it does have, simply because Bust A Move 4 is already out and it is a better game. Features such as the chain reaction combos and the pulley system in Bust A Move 4 make Bust A Move 99 look dated.

Another issue is the lack of support for the analog sticks and the Dual Shock vibration function. The software has no idea that the Dual Shock pad even exists. This may not sound like a big deal, but it does make a difference while playing. The key to winning in Bust A Move is speed and accuracy. A single misalignment of the cannon can instantly destroy any advantage you may have had over an opponent. After playing Bust A Move 2 on the N64 with the analog stick, I expected the more recent PlayStation version to have analog support as well. Digital control just isn't as accurate. It seems I was asking for a bit much.

Had Bust A Move 99 been released back when it was still fresh and new the game would have done well, and it would have received a Gold rating. Time waits for no man (or game) though and Bust A Move 99 is the proof. By releasing this game today, and without any improvements, Acclaim is just setting it up to fail. Would it really have been that hard to add features such as analog control to the game? At least then it might be worth having.

The new name may fool some unsuspecting buyers into purchasing Bust A Move 99, but those in the know will pass in favor of Bust A Move 4. Why buy last year's model when you can get this year's for the same price?



ADAM

PS THE EDITORIAL LINE EXTREME 30%

COMPATIBILITY



The new name may fool some unsuspecting buyers into purchasing Bust A Move 99, but those in the know will pass in favor of Bust A Move 4. Why buy last year's model when you can get this year's for the same price?



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SPORTS



EDITORIAL

As I sit down to write this month's editorial, I have to stop playing Test Drive 5 (mostly because I can't play and type at the same time). After having spent what seems like a gagillion (a "gagillion" is one more than a "google") hours playing Namco's R4 — see my review elsewhere in this issue — I still marvel at the depth of Test Drive 5. I know this game never cracked the top ten like some of the other racing games out there, but I've got to believe a lot of that has to do with the marketing of games. The EA's and Sony's of the world can put a lot of TV time (read: money) behind their better products and see the results in terms of the units sold. Smaller publishing companies can't afford to do that, and therefore you won't see their ads on MTV or ESPN. However, let's say you are one of the many game players that purchased Gran Turismo or Need for Speed III, you owe it to yourself to check out a game like Test Drive 5. Certainly, if my review (back in the December '98 issue) didn't convince you to play the game, then just about nothing will! But, and this is a big "but", the game is SO amazing, and just gets better each time you play it, it deserves your attention. The tracks are well designed and long (about 4-5 minutes each), and there's more than a dozen of 'em! Plus, you get great licensed cars, fantastic sound f/x, and a new challenge every time you play. You can't beat it! OK, that's my game of the month preamble — now on with some other thoughts!

Earlier this month, we learned that 989 Sports was canceling their hoops game (NBA Shootout 99) due to the perceived lack of interest in the professional game from video game players and the casual fan, in

general. Well, after checking out the attendance figures after the first few weeks of the NBA season, I'd have to agree with their thinking. Man, have you seen any of the games on NBC or TNT (or your local Fox station)? I've watched just about everything that's been broadcast, and all I see are empty seats in every arena. Shoot, NBC had the Lakers-Sonics on recently and, every time they cut away to scan the audience, all you saw were the empty yellow seats! Last night, I caught part of the Warrior-Clippers game, and there couldn't have been 3,000 people in attendance! Granted, neither of these two teams are going to get anyone too excited, but 3,000 people?! Man, minor league baseball in the desert draws more. It will be interesting to see what the NBA can do to bring back the fans.

Oh, one more thing about TV and some local broadcasting... I don't know how it is in your part of the country but, in the Bay Area, we have a channel that now broadcasts HIGH SCHOOL basketball games every Friday night! It's amazing! EVERY week you can see a HS game live and, over the weekend, the same station has a show that plays highlights from just about every game in the area! Man, when I was in school, we didn't get on TV until we got to the state finals and, even then, it was tape-delayed! Kids these days — they got it easy!

Eric
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PRO 18 WORLD TOUR GOLF



Most of you out there in the non-sporting world are familiar with the publisher Psygnosis, mainly because of amazing PlayStation games like the Colony Wars series and G-Police. However, such success in the "other" gaming world by no means guarantees the same type of prosperity in the sports world. Take for example, exhibit A — Pro 18 World Tour Golf.

First of all, who the heck wants to play as Dottie Pepper? Oh, sorry, you can't play "as" Dottie, only against her. But, who cares? Same goes for the rest of the pros that are included — Colin Montgomerie, Mark O'Meara, Tom Lehman, Vijay Singh, Jesper Parnevik (nice hat... is the Tour De France somewhere around?), Ian Woosnam, and Laura Davies. E-gad, Laura Davies? Granted, she can whack the thing 300 yards, but who wants to look at that for 18 holes? Obviously, the selection of pros is not the most appealing group to the average golf fan with a PlayStation. But, even to a guy who watches golf every week (every Friday, all Friday), and who lives on a golf course, for Pete's sake, I DON'T care about any of these players. Truth be told, outside of Jack, Arnie, Chi Chi, Bobin Boom, and the Shark, the rest of the players on either Tour don't have enough charisma to fill a thimble, let alone be used as icons for a golf game. Sheesh!

Anyway, despite the lack of lovable characters, you might be interested in knowing how the game plays, right? Right. You get three courses, all of which are as equally bland as the guys that play on them. Sun City, South Africa (how do you say "South Africa" without doing a Mel Gibson/Lethal Weapon impersonation?), is a course that none of you have heard of, as is Coeur D'Alene (in that mecca of golf — Idaho), and Royal County Down (somewhere in Northern Ireland). Now, granted, I don't have to play on a "famous" course if the course is decent enough, but the graphics in Pro 18 kill any chance of these courses being interesting. The course graphics are bland and lifeless — the greens look just like the fairways and the tee boxes, and the rough is just a darker shade of green. However, giving credit where credit is due, the sand traps look nice! As for the players, you can see by the accompanying screen shots that they are of the digitized FMV variety. Yuch — this technology is old and makes any product look instantly dated (as it did for Tiger 99).

Gameplay-wise, you have a few options — practice, training (although it's in a different menu screen, for some reason), tournament (1-4 rounds), skins, four ball, and





shootout. If you play golf games, then you're hip as to how these variations work. What's different about Pro 18 is the fact that the game uses a FOUR click system instead of the traditional three. Actually, it's a three click and a release-at-the-end type of mechanism. It takes a long time to get used to, but the reality of it is that it's just plain annoying, thank you very much. Why do I need another meter to "fine tune" my shot? Heck, why not add a couple of more clicks and releases and make it REALLY annoying? The putting system uses the standard two click setup, but it has to be the most frustrating experience one can have in video game golf. Shoot, I've played at least a dozen rounds, and I still don't have a feel for long putts. I started out shooting 100, but am now in the low 70's and, if it weren't for the horrific putting, I'd be taking 10-12 strokes off of that. And it's not just me - I haven't seen one of the computer "pros" sink a putt longer than 15 feet!

Pro 18 uses a couple of announcer dudes, most notably a fellow named Peter Alliss, the same guy Fox used in their forgettable golf game, "Fox Sports Golf 99". The play-by-play is done well but, every time you hit the "X" button to move to the next screen, it cuts off the dude doing the talking. So, if you want him to finish his sentence, then you've got to have patience and look at the screen a little longer (of course, you'd have to have the patience of Job to play the game, but...). You can create your own player and save his/her stats, and you can use one of four generic faces or the mug of one of the pros. Then choose their clubs, ball type (2 or 3 piece), shaft type, and iron type (blades or cavity). Pro 18 keeps track of your stats in 10 different categories, including longest drive. The odd thing about your drives is that they are always measured in increments of 5, ie: 270, 275, 280. No 288, or 273 yards - very strange. Oh, and lest we forget how the ball takes off and lands! How's this - whack your driver and the ball takes off like you just hit a 9 iron then, when the ball finally succumbs to Earth's gravitational pull, it hits the fairway and bounces 25 feet up in the air (like it hit the cart path or something)! What the heck is that all about? I've played on some pretty dry courses, but never seen anything like that.

Anyway, if I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times - if you want a good golf game, then go get Hot Shots Golf. Or, if you just want to get a good GAME, go get Hot Shots Golf! Avoid the rest of the golf games entirely, and you can put Pro 18 in with the rest of the forgettable golf sins.

REVIEW **PS Extreme SPORTS**

PAGE 69



DEVELOPED BY ARGENT
PUBLISHED BY 989 SPORTS
AVAILABLE APRIL

MLB 2000



Here's our last preview of ANY baseball title for 1999 (that is, if you don't count the High Heat preview on the next page, otherwise this is the SECOND to last baseball preview of 1999)! In the next issue, we promise to have nothing but baseball game reviews (and maybe a little NBA hoops if we can get a working 'In the Zone

99 in here), and we should have them all! MLB 2000 looks to stay on top, but the buzz from camp Interplay (Baseball 2000) and the compound at EA Sports (Triple Play 2000) is that they are prepared to battle it out all the way down to the final pitch. This could be (and should be) the best year yet for video game baseball (heck, even that "other"

system has some decent baseball games coming out). In the meantime, read a little more on what 989 has in store for MLB 2000!

As if having Vin Scully in the play-by-play isn't enough, this year ESPN's Dave Campbell joins Vin to bring you all the action, including more in-depth player descriptions; stats and opinions to help try and recreate the ultimate MLB broadcasting experience. Another new wrinkle can be found in the player models. MLB 2000 looks to add more detail to everything the players do, from the way they walk up to the plate and get in their own individual batting stance, to the way their uniforms hang off of their out-of-

shape bodies (pitchers and old singles hitters only). And, as an added bonus, most of the players' actual faces have been slapped onto their polygonal cyber-players bodies, so you can see the pain on their faces as they watch the third strike change-up float by for the game ending strike-out.

One of the best features in last year's game was the Spring Training mode. Well, the fine folks over at 989 have made this year's version even better! This year, if you don't make the big club out of Spring Training, you can stay in extended Spring Training in hopes of getting hot enough to be called up. With the help of former MLB Scouts,

989 Sports will give you the chance to work as the GM and build your team into the next baseball dynasty. Gamers can create, draft, trade, call up, waive, release, and sign players as free agents. Keep checking the waiver wire and pay attention, as the CPU will generate trades between other clubs as the season progresses.

Make sure not to miss the trade deadline. Utilize Scouting Reports and Player Ratings from real former Major League scouts, to judge the talent of your Minor Leaguers. Turn on the new Manager Mode option and utilize the Scouting reports to set-up hitters and position your defensive. Watch as your decisions play out while you call the shots.

New stadium models in MLB 2000 allow you to see Waveland Avenue behind Wrigley (although we haven't confirmed if you can actually HIT one there), admire the player Memorials at Yankee Stadium, and even hop the fence and take a splash in the pool in Arizona! Statistics are also bigger and better, as over 90 different categories are tracked. And, don't forget to collect the hardware should you win the Cy

Young, Triple Crown, or best dressed awards! Uh, skip that last one! See ya next month!



HIGH HEAT BASEBALL 2000

3DO / Team .366 / April

PREVIEWS **PS Extreme SPORTS**

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Just when you thought the idea of a quick-paced, arcade-style game of baseball had gone the way games named after rock bands, the 3DO company is getting ready to launch High Heat Baseball 2000. The game does not have a MLB license (but it does have all of the real players, thanks to the MLBPA license), so the development team (Team .366) was able to get away with some things that you won't find in any of the baseball simulations out there.

High Heat features the PlayStation hi-res mode of 512x240 that shows off the game's 37 high resolution stadiums, including 2 classics and 4 never-before-seen stadiums. The player movements

have been motion captured to provide all of the fancy catches, throws, and swings that the big leaguers use. And, speaking of the players, the player models are highly detailed and are displayed with real-time lighting. Some of the High Heat exclusives are the "TruePlay" artificial intelligence (AI

that "guarantees" true-to-life base running, fielding and managing), and the "TruePitch" pitching scheme that provides 9 different pitching types with virtually infinite pitch locations. There's also an innovative Pitcher-Batter interface, including the "Guess Pitch" option (which is something every baseball game should have). High Heat Baseball 2000 includes five gameplay modes: Exhibition, Season, Home Run Derby, Playoffs, and Quick Play. The play-by-play commentary is from San Francisco Giants announcer Ted Robinson, and all of the GM modes that you have come to expect can be found Inside High Heat, as well.



3XTREME

989 Studios / 989 Studios / May

We previewed 989's 3XTREME back in our February issue but, now that we've got so much more info (and some cool new screens), we just had to tell you about it! The news is that you can race (skateboards, in-line skates, BMX bikes) in five different locations - Aztec Island, Lakeside Park, Metro, Arroyo Grande, and Seacrest - for a combined 12 different tracks in Season mode. As you skate through each level, you'll earn points that you can use to upgrade your equipment. Some of the equipment manufacturers include Santa Cruz (7 types of skateboards), Creature (7 skateboards), Toy Machine (7 skateboards), Zero (again, 7 boards), Foundation (you guessed it, 7 boards), GT (7 bikes), Trek (7 bikes), K2 (6 bikes), Salomon (7 in-line skates), and a bunch of other makers that we just don't have space to mention. There will be

13 different characters to use all of this gear, and they each have their own strengths and weaknesses (although they can all punch pretty good). Two player, vertical: split-screen is an option in three game modes (all but Season). 989 Studios recently signed the band Ultraspank for the soundtrack, so those of you (many, some, few?) that have heard of them should be pretty excited! Since the original Xtreme Games graced the very first cover of PSXtreme (November '95), we are eagerly awaiting the chance to play the third installment in the series. Look for a complete review in the next issue!



START YOUR ENGINES



by Mark Androvich

This is the second installment of a new feature that will look at the progression of notable games in each genre on the PlayStation. This month — Racing Games

The racing genre is probably the most crowded of all the PlayStation game categories, with no less than 60 games reaching the market in the past three years — and more are on the way! Car racing games have also been a fixture in the arcades since the very beginning. Their popularity is probably due in part to America's love of automobiles, and their longevity is likely due to the fact that the essence of a racing game is pure and simple — use the controls to avoid a collision.

THAT WAS THEN...

The very first racing games to appear in the arcades were viewed from a top-down perspective. One benefit of fitting the entire track on screen at once was that more than one person could play. *Indy 800*, in fact, allowed 8 people to play simultaneously (and, as you could imagine, took up most of the space in an arcade). *Sprint*, a more sensible upright, allowed

you to race against computer-controlled cars. This "bird's eye view" perspective vanished with the advent of the first-person viewpoint, and only returned briefly in the late 1980's, thanks to a belated arcade sequel called *Super Sprint* and *Championship Sprint*.

Other games, such as *Super Bug* and *Fire Truck*, also utilized a top down perspective but, instead of displaying the entire "track" at once, they rotated a larger course around the car (which was centered in the middle of the screen). The



problem with this style was that players didn't have much time to react to course changes, and the games seemed to handle only 90 degree angle turns. This viewpoint evolved so that the car was instead placed at the bottom of the screen

EXHIBITION

and the road scrolled downwards towards it. Since it was no longer difficult to stay on the road, as it never really curved, a new challenge was added — avoiding cars and other obstacles. Monaco GP was an early example, and Spy Hunter a later example, of a vertical scrolling style which is rarely used today. This viewpoint also evolved and was gradually angled, in games such as Turbo and Pole Position, to the point where the horizon became visible. The third-person perspective (behind the car) was born.



A more realistic first-person viewpoint wasn't attempted until Atari's Night Driver. This black and white machine's capabilities were so limited that it could not draw a horizon. Nor could it handle scenery or oncoming cars (although these were added in the home version). In fact, except for the illuminated lane markers on each side of the road, the entire screen was dark (hence the title). While primitive, it was better able to capture the sensation of driving than the aerial view and paved the road for more realistic games to follow.



Atari 2600 Night Driver

...THIS IS NOW.

Today, the vast majority of home and coin-op racing games allow players to select from more than one vantage — usually the first or third-person viewpoint. Rather than being differentiated according to their perspectives, modern racing games can instead be generally divided into one of two categories — simulation or arcade-style. The former attempts to replicate physics, often gives players the ability to modify their cars, and usually uses licensed automobiles, courses, and real-life drivers. The latter is more concerned with quick action, exaggerated crashes, courses in exotic or imaginary locales, and sometimes even combat.

Thanks to improvements in technology, neither style is limited to drawing just the markers on the side of a road either. Like their arcade counterparts, console system racing games

in the late 1980's and early 1990's simulated depth using scaling sprites. With the introduction of the Sony PlayStation and its ability to utilize polygons, home racing games were finally able to make the jump to three-dimensions.

1995:

The first wildly successful game to appear for the PlayStation was Ridge Racer, Namco's translation of its arcade hit. Amazingly, the entire game loaded into the system's resident memory — allowing you to use your own music CD's for a soundtrack. The game was strictly an arcade-style contest. There were no licensed vehicles, no car damage, and unrealistic physics — and yet it was a lot of fun to play.



Ridge Racer

Speaking of car damage, Psygnosis' Destruction Derby had a ton of it. Although the game did feature racing modes in which destruction was not rewarded, the main thrill of the game was being able to slam your car into your opponents' vehicles and watch the pieces fly. Points were awarded both for winning races and for causing damage. And, for those who wanted to forgo the racing altogether, DD also supplied a circular arena for all-out vehicle mayhem.



Wipeout

Psygnosis' Wipeout introduced futuristic racing in the form of hovercraft. Although its play mechanics were similar to that of the classic coin-op S.T.U.N. Runner, the interesting track designs and use of techno music for the soundtrack made the game stand out even though it wasn't the most intense of contests.



ESPN Xtreme Games

Let's say you think that automobile racing was the only name of the game, our first cover game — EA's Road Rash (a.k.a. Xtreme) — allowed players to race mountain bikes, skateboards, in-line skates, and street bikes in a variety of real-world settings. Of course, racing was only half the fun of this game which also allowed you to kick and punch your opponents off their vehicles. This concept was surely inspired by EA's Road Rash, the Genesis and 3DO motorcycle racing/fighting hybrid, which also made an early appearance on the PlayStation.



Road Rash

1996:

Need For Speed, a game which first saw the light of day on the 3DO system, made the transition to the PlayStation courtesy of EA. Although



Need for Speed



Ridge Racer Revolution

Namco introduced Ridge Racer Revolution, which was more like an expansion of the original than a sequel. The game added few new elements except for a rear-view mirror Wipeout XL, on the other hand, increased the pace of the original by adding new skill levels, additional vehicles, more powerful weapons and niftier graphics effects. Destruction Derby 2 also improved upon the original by increasing the frame rate, adding new tracks, making the control tighter, and featuring more detailed crashing and smashing.

EA released Andreotti Racing, the first game to include both NASCAR and F1 racing, and the start of the "realistic" racing category for the PlayStation. Psygnosis' Formula 1 gave simulation fans access to real-life professional drivers and courses, albeit in a one-player game. NASCAR Racing, a port of the PC title, was another entry in the simulation category, although the game was not as graphically appealing as the other two.

Just when it seemed as though the genre was heading towards greater realism, along came Motor Toon Grand Prix and Street Racer. Beneath the Toontown settings and cartoon vehicles of the former lurked a solid racing game with lots of imaginative weaponry.

In the non-automobile category, Singletrac's Jet Moto introduced a jetski/motorcycle hybrid vehicle which you could race over both land and water. The catchy

the graphics lacked polish and collision physics were a little over-the-top, the game became popular for its use of real-life licensed cars and tracks which consisted of straight-away segments rather than just closed circuits.



Destruction Derby 2



NASCAR Racing



Motor Toon GP



Jet Moto

surf-punk soundtrack belied the game's extreme level of difficulty. The sequel, 2Xtreme, dumped the street luge of the original for a snowboard and added the ability to perform tricks, but the courses were not quite as interesting this time around. THQ's Bravo Air Race featured racing with WWII vintage aircraft — the first (and only) plane racing game.

1997:

EA's Need For Speed II attempted to build on the success of the original, but its slow frame rate and uninspired tracks left much to be desired. On the other end of the spectrum, Namco's Ridge Racer took that series to a new level. It featured more realistic looking courses and the ability to purchase, upgrade, and customize cars. The top-down perspective made a rare appearance in Psygnosis' Rush Hour, but, beyond that, the game was an average racer in a crowded field.

On the simulation side, Sony's CART World Series duplicated all the drivers, teams, cars, and tracks of the Championship Auto Racing Teams. While it was definitely as real as it gets, the game just didn't do anything to make itself stand out. NASCAR 98, courtesy of the developers of Andreotti Racing, focused on the stock cars of the NASCAR circuit and provided many customizable options. Formula 1 Championship Edition, the sequel to Psygnosis' hit F1, added a two-player split-screen mode and an arcade mode for quick racing but also failed to deliver a leap in technology.

Technology did advance, however, with the release of Sony's ana-



2Xtreme



Bravo Air Race



Need for Speed II



Rush Hour



CART World Series



Formula 1 Champ Edition

EXHIBITION



The Analog Controller



Porsche Challenge



Test Drive 4



Grand Tour Racing '98



Thunder Truck Rally



VMX Racing



Moto Racer

log controller. This new control would go on to become incorporated into almost every subsequent racing game. SCE's Porsche Challenge was the first game to utilize the analog control, but it was a fairly sedate experience which limited players to the use of only a single type of car — the Porsche boxer.

One of the oldest racing franchises was reborn for next generation systems courtesy of Accolade. Test Drive 4 featured licensed muscle cars and courses set in real-world locations such as San Francisco, Japan, and England as well as a drag racing strip. Unfortunately, TD4 was limited to just one player and the it was difficult to keep up with the computer-controlled opponents — especially when you could be stopped by a police officer. Slightly less difficult, but with many more options, was Activision's Grand Tour Racing '98. GTR allowed players to race not just sports cars and Indy cars but buggies, off-road vehicles, and rally cars as well, on 36 global tracks.

Off-road racing finally arrived with a vengeance in the form of Hard Core 4x4, Thunder Truck Rally, Rally Cross, Need For Speed: V Rally, and Test Drive: Off Road. Of these five, Thunder Truck Rally received the highest praise for its many modes of play, whereas the controls in both Rally Cross and NFS: V-Rally were extremely difficult to become accustomed to.

Motorcycle racing fans weren't left out either. VMX Racing, the first motorcycle game to appear on the PlayStation, was a decent racer but it paled in comparison to Moto Racer. This game offered both dirt and street bikes, a turbo feature, two-player split-screen racing, and tight controls with a quick frame rate. Jet Moto 2, a sequel to the hit hybrid racing game, added many new tracks which stretched the imagination and added to the already high level of difficulty [The "Greatest Hits" version, released in 1998, sped up the frame rate, cleaned up some graphics, and unlocked all the tracks — making

it a much better game in my opinion].

In the human-powered vehicle category, Sony managed to release both Cool Boarders and its sequel Cool Boarders 2 in the same year. The original featured solo racing with a fairly steep learning curve, but the sequel allowed races against other players, a half pipe mode for tricks, and a wider variety of moves.

1998:

The biggest news in the racing genre was also one of the best-selling games of the year — Gran Turismo. It weighed in strictly on the simulation side, requiring drivers to pass tests to earn licenses before they were able to compete in races. With cars from real-life manufacturers such as Nissan, Toyota, and Chevrolet, and near photo-realistic replays, GT set the new high mark for realism.

Sony's release of the Dual Shock Analog controller in the U.S. probably contributed to GT's success by letting players "feel" the pull of the engines. These controllers would have a major impact on the racing genre by allowing designers to incorporate force feedback in all subsequent games.

While not quite as successful as GT, Need For Speed III: Hot Pursuit returned the series to its former glory. The frame rate, courses, and graphics were all much improved from the second edition, and the game added a "hot pursuit" mode in which players must elude the authorities. Test Drive 5 featured a similar mode, except this time players could take the wheel of the pursuing patrol car. Taking a cue from Gran Turismo, TD 5 also included television-style replays and provided for a split-screen two player game which was notably absent from TD 4. Not only did the designers present all new tracks, but they included tracks from the prior game at a faster frame rate.

TOCA introduced the popular European championship racing circuit to America, while NASCAR 99 continued the



Jet Moto 2



Cool Boarders



Gran Turismo



Dual Shock Analog



Need For Speed III



Test Drive 5



Rally Cross 2



Micro Machines V3



San Francisco Rush



Turboprop Racing



Super Cross 98



Moto Racer 2

series more familiar to players in the States. Meanwhile, off-road racing saw sequels such as Rally Cross 2, which improved upon the control of the original, and Test Drive: OffRoad 2 which featured licensed vehicles (including a Hummer) and a variety of courses which utilized the TD4 game engine.

In the arcade style, Micro Machines V3 allowed up to four players to race miniature cars on tracks such as the kitchen table, a laboratory, and the beach. How did the game handle multiple players? Through a unique system that awards the driver who pulls away from the pack and then plays "catch up" for those left behind. One of the arcade's most popular driving games, San Francisco RUSH, was brought to the PlayStation but could not successfully capture the feeling of the coin-op.

In the non-automobile category, the year saw the introduction of two speedboat racing games. VR Powerboat Racing and Turboprop Racing. The latter moved at a dizzying 60 fps and had a steep learning curve as far as controls were concerned, but was definitely the better of the two.

Jeremy McGrath Super Cross '98, a motorcycle racer, was the first PlayStation game to feature a track editor. However, the game itself suffered from a slow frame rate, low resolution graphics, and a lack of analog support. Moto Racer 2 also added a limited track editor and many more tracks to race the motorcycles on, but otherwise didn't change much else. Road Rash 3D updated the graphics of the classic motorcycle racing/fighting game, but slipped a little in the gameplay department.

One of the most unusual racing games ever was Running Wild, in which players raced... running animals such as elephants and goats. Not a bad game, but definitely geared towards a younger audience. The Singletac folks responsible for the Jet Moto series came up with a new alternative — Streak — which featured hoverboard racing through stereotypical post-apocalyptic settings. Cool Boarders 3, taken over by Idol Minds and 989 Studios, was an improvement over the earlier incarnations thanks to better graphics, nice character animation, and different styles of competition.

1999:

After a long absence, Namco will return with Ridge Racer Type 4 (R4). Not only is the game compatible with the new JogCon controller, but the deluxe edition will also come with an updated version of Ridge Racer running at 60 fps. Although the Ridge Racer series has leaned towards the arcade-style category, R4 might be the game to topple Gran Turismo from its position as the current king of the genre.

Not to be outdone, EA is releasing its own fourth game in the Need for Speed series — Need For Speed: High Stakes. New this year will be the ability to sustain damage to your car, to play as a pursuing officer, to customize your vehicle, and to race for "pink slips" (effectively giving up your car to the winner).

Other notable racing games to be released this year include: Rollcage, which allows players to drive on and through almost everything; Rushdown, which adds kayak racing as well as snowboarding and mountain biking; 3Xtreme, a



Running Wild



Streak



Cool Boarders 3



Ridge Racer Type 4



Namco's JogCon



Need for Speed: High Stakes

EXHIBITION

revamped sequel in the extreme sports line; *Driver*, a 3D game where you take to the city streets as an undercover cop and run jobs for the mob; and *Jeff Gordon Racing*, a futuristic take on the auto racing genre designed with the assistance of the famous driver himself.



Driver

CONTROL:

Imagine learning to drive your very first car (for me, a 1972 Pinto station wagon with imitation wood grain paneling on the side), but instead of a steering wheel you find a joystick or a cross pad. Instead of the gas pedal you find a fire button, and the brake is also represented by another button. While you would probably get used to the controls after awhile, it just wouldn't "feel" right. Such has been the problem in capturing the feeling of car racing on home consoles.

Arcade racing games featured steering wheels and gas pedals, albeit miniature ones, but only because the units cost thousands of dollars. But what about a \$100 home system? The first steering controllers appeared for the Atari 2600 and were packaged with the home version of *Indy 500*. With one fire button for the gas, and 360 degrees of movement for steering, these controllers were suited to the overhead style racing games but were not as practical for first-person perspective racing. Subsequent home racing games for the 2600 utilized the analog paddle controllers instead.

The next system to feature a specialized controller for racing games was the Colecovision. Coleco introduced a steering wheel about the size of a saucer with a separate gas pedal to be used with the home version of *Turbo*. After the videogame market crash of 1983-84, and the emergence of Nintendo's NES as the next wave of gaming, digital cross pads became the norm. It would be ten years before steering wheels would be seen again.

Several companies have released steering wheel controllers to be used with the PlayStation. While expensive, they are a worthwhile investment if you happen to be a die-hard racing fan looking for a more realistic driving experience. Factors you want to look for include whether or not you can adjust the sensitivity, whether or not the wheel has tension, whether or not you can use it in a sitting position, and whether or not it offers force feedback. A personal favorite is the V3. Although it does not allow for feedback, it is more adjustable than other steering wheels.

With the release of the original *Ridge Racer*, Namco also released a specialized racing controller known as the NeG-Con. The unit works by turning the two halves of the controller which rotate independently from each other. While there is a slight learning curve involved, many racing game fans swear by it.

This year, with the release of *R4*, the newest game in the

Ridge Racer series, Namco will be releasing another specialized racing controller called the JogCon. This unit resembles a normal PlayStation controller with the addition of a tiny steering wheel (with force feedback) in the center that can be accessed by either thumb.

Finally, there is the Dual Shock Analog controller which now comes standard with all PlayStation units. Depending upon the game, the Dual Shock can provide a greater degree of control and has the added benefit of force feedback.



THE CHECKERED FLAG:

Racing games do not appear to have evolved as much as other genres have over the years, but then again they don't need to. The essence of a racing game is, and always will be, avoiding obstacles — a simplistic bit of programming for any system. Evolution has come in the form of improved graphics, more realistic physics, better control, and non-essential "whistles and bells," such as replays and custom paint jobs.

Just about every aspect of driving has already been presented in one game or another — vehicle damage, changing weather, parts upgrades, off-road shortcuts, hidden areas, destructible landscapes, and police pursuit. In addition, just about every type of vehicle has already been made the subject of a racing game — cars, trucks, motorcycles, boats, bicycles, skateboards, snowboards, kayaks, and even airplanes. It is hard to think of any new features that may be coming our way in the next few years. Does that mean that the racing genre is dying out? Definitely not!

Videogame technology has reached such an impressive level that improvements to future racing games are likely to be subtle. Look for near photo-realistic graphics, faster frame rates, more tracks, newer licensed vehicles, truer physics, and the ability to edit and create your own courses. However incremental these improvements might be, you can be sure that, no matter what home videogame system becomes popular in the future, racing games will make up a large part of its software library.

As long as there continue to be cars in the "real world," the videogame world will provide you with an opportunity to drive vehicles you can't afford, in places you've never been to, in a reckless manner which you know you shouldn't. That is exactly what makes racing videogames so much fun — they allow us to quench our apparently insatiable "need for speed."

The PSExtreme Historical Ranking Chart

The EXCAVATE section is where we dig up 15 months worth of ratings and present them on one easy-to-read spread, along with a little explanation/breakdown of our rating system. Use this as your buying guide throughout the year and as a reference for those older games that you might have missed (or wish you had).

GAME/TITLE	ISSUE	RATING	GAME/TITLE	ISSUE	RATING
Crash Bandicoot 2	December 1997	99%	Jersey Devil	July 1998	93%
Resident Evil 2	March 1998	99%	Pixel Schools	November 1998	93%
QEX: Enter the Gecko	March 1998	99%	Gully Gear	December 1998	93%
Resident Evil: Director's Cut	November 1997	98%	Steel Reign	November 1997	92%
Moto Racer	December 1997	98%	Nightmare Creatures	December 1997	92%
One	February 1998	98%	Fighting Force	December 1997	92%
Grin Tulumo	June 1998	98%	Armored Core	December 1997	92%
Spyro the Dragon	October 1998	98%	Hot Shots Golf	April 1998	92%
NFL GameDay 99	October 1998	98%	VR Baseball 99	June 1998	92%
NFL Blitz	October 1998	98%	Cardinal Syn	June 1998	92%
Modivul	November 1998	98%	The Granstream Saga	July 1998	92%
Metal Gear Solid	December 1998	98%	Panzone Eve	September 1998	92%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	December 1998	98%	WWF War Zone	September 1998	92%
Tomb Raider II	December 1997	98%	Brunswick Pro Circuit Bowling	November 1998	92%
Tomb Raider III	January 1999	98%	Cool Boarders 3	November 1998	92%
GOLD GAMES		RATING	Strike	December 1998	92%
Tekken 3	May 1998	97%	Knockout Kings	January 1999	92%
Test Drive 5	December 1998	97%	NCAA Final Four 99	March 1999	92%
NBA Live 98	December 1997	96%	NHL Breakaway 98	November 1997	91%
NCAA GameBreaker 98	January 1998	96%	Forsaken	June 1998	91%
Hebort	April 1998	96%	Test Drive: Off Road 2	December 1998	91%
Blasto	May 1998	96%	Wild 9	December 1998	91%
MLB 98	June 1998	96%	Assault Reimulsion	December 1998	91%
Colony Wars: Vengeance	December 1998	96%	Castlevania	November 1997	90%
Bust-A-Groove	January 1999	96%	Pandemonium 2	November 1997	90%
Civilization II	March 1999	96%	Test Drive 4	December 1997	90%
NHL Face-off 98	November 1997	95%	F1 Championship Edition	December 1997	90%
Critical Depth	January 1998	95%	Broken Sword	February 1998	90%
Rogue Trip	November 1998	95%	Alundra	February 1998	90%
Kagero: Deception II	December 1998	95%	Command & Conquer: Red Alert	February 1998	90%
NHL Face-off 99	December 1998	95%	Heart of Darkness	September 1998	90%
Duke Nukem: Time to Kill	December 1998	95%	Kula World	September 1998	90%
A Bugs Life	December 1998	95%	G-Darius	October 1998	90%
NCAA GameBreaker 99	January 1999	95%	Moto Racer 2	November 1998	90%
Alien: The Heartless	February 1999	95%	Bushido Blade 2	November 1998	90%
MDK	December 1997	94%	The Unholy War	November 1998	90%
Colony Wars	December 1997	94%	The Fifth Element	December 1998	90%
Jet Moto 2	December 1997	94%	Darkstalkers 3	January 1999	90%
FIFA 98	February 1998	94%	Rug Rats	January 1999	90%
NBA Shootout 98	April 1998	94%	Bust-A-Move 4	January 1999	90%
Einharder	May 1998	94%	Tiny Tank	February 1999	90%
NFL Xtreme	August 1998	94%	Freestyle Boardin' 99	March 1999	90%
Rally Cross 2	January 1999	94%	Silent Hill	March 1999	90%
NBA Live 98	January 1998	94%	SILVER GAMES		RATING
Ace's Lixious	February 1999	93%	Final Fantasy Tactics	January 1998	88%
Street Fighter EX +	November 1997	93%	Crash of Time II	May 1998	89%
G-Police	November 1997	93%	Azure Dreams	July 1998	89%
Bloody Roar	March 1998	93%	Rosco McQueen	July 1998	89%
Hood for Speed III	May 1998	93%	Turbo Prop Racing	August 1998	89%
Tombat	May 1998	93%	Trap Gunner	October 1998	89%
NEO: Nitrous Code	July 1998	93%	Tenchu	November 1998	89%
World Cup 98	July 1998	93%	NBA Fastbreak 98	January 1999	88%
			X-Men Vs Street Fighter EX	May 1998	88%

EXCAVATE

Road Rash 3D	July 1998	88%
C The Contra Adventure	September 1998	88%
Brigandine	January 1999	88%
Contender	February 1999	88%
WCW/NWO Thunder	February 1999	88%
Red Asphalt	December 1997	87%
Shipwrecked	December 1997	87%
CART World Series	December 1997	87%
Shadow Master	January 1998	87%
WCW Nitro	February 1998	87%
Rascal	March 1998	87%
Saga Frontier	April 1998	87%
Dead or Alive	April 1998	87%
Kartia	August 1998	87%
Team Lost Rac Racer	October 1998	87%
Madden NFL 99	October 1998	87%
Backstreet Billiards	December 1998	87%
Uprising X	February 1999	87%
Mr. Domino	February 1999	87%
Marvel Super Heroes	November 1997	86%
Maximum Force	November 1997	86%
Rampage World Tour	December 1997	86%
Arcades Greatest Hits 2	January 1998	86%
Auto Destruct	February 1998	86%
Nagano Winter Olympics	February 1998	86%
Triple Play 98	April 1998	86%
International Superstar Soccer Pro 98	August 1998	86%
NCAA Football 98	September 1998	86%
NHL 99	December 1998	86%
Nuclear Strike	November 1997	85%
NASCAR 98	November 1997	85%
PGA Tour 98	November 1997	85%
NHL 98	November 1997	85%
Ghost in the Shell	November 1997	85%
Monopoly	February 1998	85%
Skull Monkeys	March 1998	85%
Diablo	May 1998	85%
Elemental Gearbolt	August 1998	85%
Thunder Force V	October 1998	85%
Command & Conquer: Retaliation	October 1998	85%
Motocross	November 1998	85%
Pool Hustler	December 1998	85%
Asteroids	January 1999	85%
Destiny	February 1999	85%
Versus	December 1997	84%
Klonoa	March 1998	84%
Vigilante 0	July 1998	84%
Resident Evil and Resident Evil 2: Dual Shock	October 1998	84%
S.C.A.R.S.	November 1998	84%
The Lost World	November 1997	83%
Intelligent Cubes	January 1998	83%
NBA in the Zone 98	February 1998	83%
NASCAR 99	November 1998	83%
Xenogears	December 1998	83%
Dragonseed	December 1998	83%
Armored Core: Project Phantasma	January 1999	83%
Mass Destruction	December 1997	82%
Cool Boarders 2	December 1997	82%
Masters of Tennis Kats	January 1998	82%
Monster Rancher	January 1998	82%
Progger	January 1998	82%
Mortal Kombat 4	August 1998	82%
Grand Theft Auto	August 1998	82%
Future Cop: L.A.P.D.	October 1998	82%
Academy Classics	November 1998	82%
Ninja: Shadow of Darkness	November 1998	82%
Running Wild	December 1998	82%

Formula 1 98	January 1999	82%
Twisted Metal 3	January 1999	82%
Street Fighter Collection	November 1997	81%
Bottom of the 9th 97	November 1997	81%
Newman Pass / Racing	March 1998	81%
VII Powerboat Racing	April 1998	81%
Touring Car Championship	September 1998	81%
Devil Dice	October 1998	81%
Brave Fencer Musashi	December 1998	81%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 99	January 1999	81%
K1 Revenge	March 1999	81%
Ali's Odyssey	November 1997	80%
Tecmo Shocks	November 1997	80%
Pain Blank	January 1998	80%
Duke Nukem	February 1998	80%
Pocket Fighter	August 1998	80%
Blast Radius	February 1999	80%
Intimidating Stick	February 1999	80%

FRENCH GAMES

Micro Machines V3	February 1998	79%
WarGames	September 1998	79%
Batman and Robin	October 1998	79%
Spice World	October 1998	79%
Annihilation: Ten Pin Alley	January 1999	79%
R-Types	March 1999	79%
Mega Man X4	November 1997	78%
Jimmy Johnson Football	November 1997	78%
Speed Racer	May 1998	78%
Dark Omen	June 1998	78%
Nectans: Military Madness	February 1999	78%
Tennis Arena	December 1997	77%
Phall 3-D	June 1998	76%
Sentinel Returns	August 1998	76%
Dead in the Water	February 1999	76%
Monkey Hero	March 1999	76%
Riven	March 1998	75%
Ray Racers	March 1998	75%
Fox Sports Golf 99	July 1998	75%
Bottom of the 9th 99	September 1998	75%
Street Fighter Collection 2	October 1998	75%
Master of Monsters: Disciples of Gaea	November 1998	75%
Polybricks	February 1999	75%
Need for Speed: V-Rally	December 1997	74%
NCAA March Madness 98	April 1998	74%
Crime Killer	September 1998	74%
Small Soldiers	December 1998	74%
Mega Man Legends	June 1998	72%
Bombberman World	November 1998	72%
Courier Crisis	December 1997	71%
Fox Sports Soccer 99	July 1998	71%
Super Cross 98	August 1998	71%
O.D.T.	December 1998	70%
NCAA March Madness 99	February 1999	70%

TIN GAMES

ISSUE	RATING
Beast Wars	March 1998 69%
X-Men Children of the Atom	April 1998 69%
Tales of Destiny	November 1998 69%
Golden Nugget	November 1997 68%
Spawn	January 1998 68%
Judge Dredd	May 1998 68%
Adidas Power Soccer 98	August 1998 68%
Bug Riders	January 1998 68%
Bo F.R.E.A.K.S.	July 1998 65%
Cassini Palace	December 1997 64%
Court Brosiers	August 1998 62%
Apocalypse	January 1999 62%
Purky Skunk	January 1998 60%

WHAT DO ALL THOSE NUMBERS MEAN?

98-100%
The ultimate gaming experience.

90-97%
"Must buy" game with serious or other's best of appeal; not as recommended for best of game.

80-89%
Good game, but lacking in some areas, only for fans of that type of game.

70-79%
Mediocre title that suffers from some serious flaws. Don't - don't buy.

60-69%
The games are to be avoided at all costs. Only die-hard gamers would buy them.



David Jon Winding
Publisher

HELLO AGAIN... LET'S GET BUSY!

You thought you'd gotten rid of me, didn't you? About a year ago, I decided that I had run out of things to say and hoisted the responsibility of the monthly editorial on Greg. Well, it's taken me this long to re-charge my batteries, but I'm back with a vengeance. I approached Greg with the idea of writing a no-holds-barred column on the industry and topics that cover the people we work with on a day-to-day basis, and that would answer reader questions that seem to be universal in nature. He liked the idea; at least he SAID he did... no matter! For my inaugural column, I'm going to focus my attention on some mail we've received recently regarding PlayStation 2 and Sega's Dreamcast.

I will have to assume that you have already read EXNews and that you are now aware that the PS2 spec's that we reported on back in our February '99 issue were, indeed, accurate. Well, the next PlayStation looks to be the revolutionary product that we thought it would be. We have never been driven by a need to report rumor in the guise of fact, or to get too over the top about new hardware or more business related matters within the context of the video game industry. We have always maintained that gamers want to play games... period. You have all made your hardware decisions and the majority of you are too busy concentrating on fun to worry about what Sega or Nintendo or Joe Schlabotnik's new hardware spec's are.

But, after both Greg and I spent \$1,000.00 (each) to get our hands on Sega's Dreamcast when it was first released, we felt that voicing our opinions on the subject would be worthwhile. After all; PlayStation owners are going to have Dreamcast info. shoved down their throats for the next year by magazines that, like Seymour in the "Little Shop of Horrors", can't wait to digest the next 'big thing'.

All of us at PSEXtreme are rabid gamers... we don't just play PlayStation, but are well-versed on every game system that has ever appeared in the marketplace. A number of you questioned the accuracy of our technical specifications on PS2 and took issue with our condemnation of Dreamcast. Well, guess what! Our spec's, based on Sony's presentation at a trade conference, with regard to their joint effort with Toshiba in the creation of a next generation gaming platform (see EXNews, this issue), were right on the money. 55 million polygons per second folks! Sony has been doing it right for over five years now, and I don't see an end in sight.

While Sega went from a market leader to a basement dweller and Nintendo seems to be content to release a few hits a year to their loyal audience (8-14 year olds), Sony has made all the right moves in establishing global domination. Does anyone really believe that Sega has the money to compete with Sony? Or that they have the software development talent? The Sega ship sailed a long time ago and Sonic and all of his friends aren't going to bring the S(ega) S(atum) Minnow back any time soon. The PS2's spec's are, by a factor of seven, far superior to current state of the art (represented by 3Dfx's Voodoo 3 technology and, to a lesser extent, Dreamcast). When Sega develops new hardware, they go to their local electronics shop and pick stuff off of the shelf (the Genesis, Saturn and Dreamcast were all developed around chip technology that had already been readily available in the marketplace prior to Sega launching their game systems). There is no possibility of producing anything radically different from what the market is currently experiencing when you take this kind of approach to product development. Sony, on the other hand, has relied on the technical expertise of Ken Kutaragi and his team to create NEW gaming technology that will solidify Sony's position as the global leader in electronic gaming.

Sometimes, the truth hurts. It has certainly hurt me. Hey, I believed the hype and dropped a grand on Dream-ware. Yes, Sonic and Rally 2 look nice but they are both buggy and, in my opinion, BORING! I, too, was a big Genesis player and, to this day, Sega has made some of my all-time favorite arcade games. But, the arcades don't drive home gaming anymore... it is the other way around. And, Sega has, in the way of product development, nothing but arcade games (and the one game every two years that Yūji Naka's team can produce).

The facts are these: Sega has been out of the game for over five years in America, they have never been able to gain significant market share from Sony and Nintendo in Japan, and the only pro-Sega continent (Europe) has made the jump to PlayStation in a big way. Where is Sega going to succeed, Antarctica?

An open request to anyone that is intrigued by the reported power of Dreamcast: Wait for PlayStation 2 (you can bet that it will be out in 2000) and, in the meantime, go buy Crash 3, Syphon Filter, Medievil, Metal Gear Solid, Tomb Raider 3, etc., etc. and have some fun!

Stuck? Striving for Perfection? Dimension Publishing's got the answers to your questions on the hottest games.



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DESTROYING YOUR ENEMIES ISN'T ENOUGH...



"...very impressive indeed."

-EGM

As Razel, stalk the shadows of Nosgoth hunting your vampire brethren. Impale them with spears. Incinerate them with torches. Drown them in water. No matter how you destroy them, you must feed on their souls to sustain your quest – the ruin of your creator, Kain.

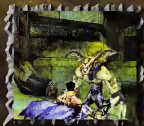


Morph onto the spectral plane and confront unique enemies and gameplay challenges

- Seamless gameplay: No load times
- Shift real-time between the material and spectral planes
- Dark gothic story

"Vampire fans get ready – Soul Reaver could be the ultimate thriller..."

-GamePro



The image is a promotional poster for the video game Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver. It depicts the character Kain, with his signature blue and white cow-print tunic and a blue cape, in a dynamic combat pose. He is holding a long, dark, ornate sword. He is fighting a Wraith, a pale, emaciated, and bloody creature with a screaming face and long, clawed fingers. The background is a dark, misty, and forested environment. The text "...YOU MUST DEVOUR THEIR SOULS" is written in a glowing green font in the upper right. The game title "LEGACY of KAIN" is in red, and "SOUL REAVER" is in a large, stylized yellow font with a red outline. At the bottom, the logos for Crystal Dynamics and Eidos Interactive are present, along with their respective websites.

...YOU MUST
DEVOUR THEIR SOULS

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